

# Robert W. Smith

## F-105 History

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**20-Aug-67**

235

The thirteenth F-105 RTU Class 68AR graduated at McConnell AFB KS. The class started on 17 Mar 67 with 18 pilots. However, three pilots with no single-engine background were eliminated due to T-33 flying deficiencies and were re-assigned to PACAF. One pilot was eliminated because he could not roll the aircraft. One was washed back to another class due to an appendectomy. Fourteen graduated with the class.

The class deployed 20 F-105s for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 4 - 14 Aug 67 with the 561 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col Lawrence E. McKenney.

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong won the Top Student award. He was assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat. Maj Kenneth E. Stout won the Top Gun award. He was assigned to Takhli.

Other pilots in the class and their SEA assignments were:

Lt Col William N. Reed - 469 TFS Korat	Capt Eddie Vernon Deck - 357 TFS Takhli
Maj William C. Diehl, Jr. - 469 TFS Korat	Capt Harold E. Forman - 357 TFS Takhli
Maj Lucian A. Ferguson - 469 TFS Korat	Capt Rodney W. McLean - 357 TFS Takhli
Maj Robert F. Grubb - 469 TFS Korat	Capt Ronald D. Patchett - 333 TFS Takhli
Maj Donald W. Hodge - 34 TFS Korat	Maj James J. Reynolds - 357 TFS Takhli
Lt Col Robert W. Smith - 34 TFS Korat	Maj Frank D. Shultz, Jr. - 333 TFS Takhli

*23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 67, USAF microfilm MO554 & Airpower History, Spring 1996, "Were We Sitting Ducks" by Spence M. Armstrong.*

**01-Oct-67**

4824

Seven F-105 pilots from RTU Class 68AR arrived at Korat RTAFB, Thailand. The men were assigned as strike pilots to the 388 TFW's two strike squadrons. Those assigned to the 469 TFS were:

Lt Col William N. Reed  
Maj Robert F. Grubb  
Maj Lucian A. Ferguson  
Maj William C. Diehl, Jr.

The pilots assigned to the 34 TFS were:

Lt Col Robert W. Smith  
Maj Donald W. Hodge  
Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

Maj Armstrong, who had been an Air Force pilot for 11 years, along with Lt Col Smith, and Lt Col Reed, had departed the States from Travis Air Force Base and had stopped at Clark AB, Phillipines where they attended Jungle Survival School for a week. They arrived at Korat on a C-47 from Bangkok.

Maj Armstrong kept a notebook log in which he documented each of the 102 combat missions that he flew during the next 6 1/2 months.

*Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished manuscript, chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 1 - 3.*

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15-Oct-67

5533

Two weeks after arriving at Korat, Lt Col Robert W. Smith from the 34 TFS flew a mission in RP-6 that was aborted due to MiG-21s..

"I was again on a strike force mission, flying number four, with 750# bombs.

"We flew into NVN from the west, over Dien Bien Phu and would soon have Hanoi in sight, heading down Thud Ridge toward our target, when Mig-21's attacked and pandemonium took hold. This really surprised me since my prior missions demonstrated our pilots were very cool under fire, heavy fire. There was too much excited chatter and decisions to salvo bombs, to suit me, so I didn't do that. The strike force broke down, then aborted the mission and headed on the long journey home, absolutely defeated by maybe a couple or four NVN fighters, but no one was hit. I was steaming mad at being defeated without a fight and I carried my full bomb load home. At the outset, I was just too stubborn to drop them, but as I continued to get angry on that long ride, decided I had to make the point that we had been shamed and had run away in the face of the enemy. As far as I know, we were driven off without a shot being fired by a Mig; for sure no one was hit.

"Had it not been hazardous for people on the ground, I would have landed with the load to drive home the point. Instead, after all the others had landed, I made a very obvious low and slow pass down the runway, just for show, then went away and made a safe salvo at the approved area. I knew it would get the attention of a lot of jocks when a returning Thud passed over with a full bomb load, making a more impressive statement than I was about to deliver.

"At the Wing debrief I was still mad as hell and made comments in no uncertain words that what we did was inexcusable for guys who hang it on the line, over tough targets, to be defeated by a few assholes who couldn't whip our butts if they outnumbered us. Unless we were under attack, personally, I hoped to never see such a disgraceful display or be part of such shame ever again. At this point we were flying strike force with pilots mixed between the 34th and our sister squadron, the 469th . I felt some regret for my outburst as I began to see our guys doing the tough stuff without a whimper, but we couldn't let the Migs force us to abort entire missions, by threat, even though it was real and a constant danger."

*Robert W. Smith autobiography at [http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch\\_5/iv.html](http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch_5/iv.html)*

17-Oct-67

1439

F-105s from the 388 TFW struck the Dap Cau railroad yard (BE 616-00039) on the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) in RP-6A at 21-11-30N and 106-05-01E. "No BDA."

The planes dropped 750-pound bombs on the yard. (Video, "F-105 Missions Over North Vietnam", report ending 25 November 1967, Film Report FR-856, Produced by the Aerospace Audio Visual Service.)

Three F-105s from "Hot Rod" flight were lost to AAA and the pilots from the 34 TFS became POWs. In his memoirs, Maj Sam Armstrong commented on the losses. He had flown his 7th combat mission the day before. "The ... day was a no fly day for me. However, we lost three members of our squadron out of a flight of four at the Dap Cau railroad yard. Dwight Sullivan, Tony Andrews and 'Digger' O'Dell were all hit by 85mm fire just before roll-in on the target. This was the first 34th loss since the Summer so it was especially tough. There was only [one] beeper heard from the three of them and nobody saw a parachute. All three turned out to get out safely and become POW's although we didn't know that at the time."

Lt Col Robert W. Smith, also from the 34 TFS, flew his 8th combat mission against Dap Cau. He

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described the day in his autobiography.

"I would fly my 8th combat mission in 12 days and it proved to be one of the greatest eye openers of my flying career. A wakeup call for a morning flight and my entire tour of combat. More than any other it affected my view of what I was there for in a very positive way, because I was not only the commander but at age 39, an 'old man' of the squadron and had a job to comfort and encourage as well as set an example and lead.

"We arrived for the Wing briefing to find out this would be a tough day, but that was the ordinary. The target was announced to be Dap Cau railroad yards, located along the Song Cau river, near the larger city of Bac Ninh. That terminal was on the northwest line out of Hanoi, about 20 miles northeast of the capitol along a main highway (1A) and NVN's prime railroad tracks, northeast to China. The area was a hub of activities and therefore a defensive center for the enemy, as well. ...

"I was flying tail-end Charlie, number 4 in the 4th flight, thus be the last to roll in on the attack, so I would get a good view of all the others in their dives. Some believed the rear slots were more vulnerable, which is argumentative when there is enough anti-aircraft fire for everyone. I never felt it mattered where I was in the formation, when the dice were rolling, they didn't stop by tail number or flight position.

"We arrived at the tankers, this time over northern Laos, and took on full fuel in standard order of flight leader, 2, 3, then 4. The sequence assured the positions that used more fuel would depart for targets with the most. Each flight had its tanker and we flew formation with tankers in a racetrack pattern, until time to top off the fuel and depart for the target. The initial refueling of four took some time but the top off was brief, which assured maximum fuel for each and minimum variation within the flight.

"We flew north to about 20 degrees 45 minutes north latitude, then eastward into North Vietnam passing Dien Bien Phu, where the French had been badly defeated by the NVN. This was always a point for alertness, since the NVN had radar controlled 100 mm or 85s batteries scattered about and sometimes practiced on us in that vicinity. The entire country north is mountainous and rugged and up to a mile high, so visually acquiring them was impossible. We cruised east in spread formation for Mig watch to Thud Ridge, and there were warnings of Mig activity but no attack. Then tightened to formation flying southeast along the ridge to gain protection from SAMs, until about 20 miles north of 'Downtown'. From there we turned eastward and assumed ECM formation for the cruise to target, climbing to over 16,000 feet for our attack.

"I got my first full view of Hanoi and its' surroundings and of how large the Red River was and the great expanse of the huge delta going south of Hanoi. ...

"As we started a left turn I had a great view of Hanoi, the expansive Red River delta and very broad river. The delta had many rivers, one of which meandered past Bac Ninh, 20 miles east as we turned. ...

"We departed the ridge at about 12,000 feet, hit the burners and leveled at about 18,000 for the dive runs. The radar aimed 85 or 100 mm batteries, opened up with their large black burst around us as we approached. They posed a real threat, being lethal well above 20,000 feet. The target was to our right so I was sitting on the far left and above the last seven to make the turning roll-in to the dive before me. As the lead flights went into full dive one by one, I began to see the black bursts of the long range AAA. Then, as the lead flight started down, the smaller black puffs of 57 mm and finally the grayish puffs of 37s as the dives extended.

"Number four on the 3rd flight had rolled into his dive, so my leader would follow suit momentarily,

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but I was watching the diving line of attackers when an airplane from the attacking flight was blown to bits, then another was destroyed and almost simultaneously a third....three of my new squadron mates would not come home. It was a picture that was indelible yet momentary.

"Suddenly my element lead rolled in and it was my turn. Now I had only one thought and that was to place my 6 bombs on the railroad. With a rail yard's vulnerability and a careful effort, I knew I could place my entire load on target.

"When I rolled in for my dive bomb run I was completely focused and what I saw was out of mind: The best catharsis for fear on a dive bomb run and absolutely necessary to bombing accuracy. My intended 60 degree dive would be shallow, due to starting from the farthest outside of the formation, but I could adjust for it with a lower bomb release, faster speed and/or aim long. Fortunately, the railroads tracks were long and straight so only the cross-track miss distance was critical, a far easier situation. After release of ordnance I was free to make any break, keeping in mind the withdrawal direction to locate and rejoin my flight.

"We fueled in fours on our assigned tanker, inbound and out, but this time we arrived as five, because Capt. Floyd 'Skeets' Heizing, the only flyer left in the air from the 3rd flight, joined us on our journey home. His moving in to join us really drove home the realization of what I witnessed, and I suddenly recalled the deadly reality of those black and white bursts around us all." (Robert W. Smith Autobiography at [http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch\\_5/iv.html](http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch_5/iv.html))

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS flew on this mission for which he was awarded the Air Medal (18 OLC) for meritorious achievement. "... Major Britt was a member of Crossbow Flight assigned to attack a high priority military target. Intense and accurate hostile fire scored direct hits on three aircraft in the force. Major Britt continued on to deliver his bombs precisely on target destroying rolling stock and rendering the target area unserviceable. ..." (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Eighteenth Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 10.*

#### 19-Oct-67

4777

The Wild Weasel crew of Capt Robert E. Dorrrough, Jr. and EWO Maj Clarence S. "Bud" Summers from the 44 TFS flew their 68th mission over North Vietnam.

"Thur - Had a fun mission today. Led a four-ship to Pack 5 this afternoon, and we did good work. #2 Barker [Capt Jay M. Barker], Dick Arnold [Capt Richard W. Arnold] #3, Lt Col Smith [Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS] #4. The weather was quite bad - a solid deck about 8,000' above the ground and 1,000 feet thick. With all the mountains, we just could not stay underneath. There were no signals up, so we went looking for a hole in the clouds. We found one right on Route 6, rolled in and got two road cuts. Then I dropped my CBU's in a suspected truck park and the whole sky lit up with secondaries. The flight then made a couple of strafe passes to mop up."

*Bob Dorrrough's Combat Diary*

#### 23-Oct-67

3438

Air Force planes struck the Phu Tho railroad yard (BE 616-01829) on the Northwest Rail Line (RR 1) in RP-6A at 21-24-05N and 105-13-35E. BDA photography on 26 October revealed tracks in the yard were interdicted, one through line was serviceable, and there were 9 serviceable rail cars.

Two F-105D pilots from Korat flew on this mission designated RT56A-173. Capt Wilson from the 44 TFS flew 61-0068 and Lt Col Robert W. Smith from the 34 TFS flew 61-0029. Capt Wilson's camera film showed CBU's dropping.

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*Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967 & Nat'l Archives film record NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B.*

**24-Oct-67**

342

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 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.'

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" '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 wagged 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 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.

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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 & 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,

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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.

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

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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 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.*

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# Robert W. Smith

## F-105 History

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27-Oct-67

1188

Also on Friday, twelve F-105s from the 388 TFW pounded the Hanoi storage area located at the southeast end of the Bac Mai airfield runway (JCS 7) at coordinates 20-59-06N 105-50-35E. As a target, the storage area was designated ART 5434 and BE 610-00698. The airfield itself was not yet an approved target.

Strike crews reported that numerous secondary explosions and fires erupted from the target area. Post-strike photos from 28 October showed a total of 32 buildings destroyed or extensively damaged. (Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967.)

"This was the first time for the complex to be bombed since August 1967."

Six F-105 pilots from the 469 TFS participated in this strike. They were Capt Hal P. Henning in F-105F 62-4439; Col James Ellis Bean, the Wing's Deputy for Operations, in F-105D 62-4359; Lt Col William N. Reed in F-105D 59-1743; Capt Richard A. Frederick flying F-105D 61-0124; Navy exchange officer Lt James Karg in 59-1759; and Capt Russell E. Temperley flying in an Iron Hand support flight in F-105D 61-0126.

Capt Henning was awarded the Air Force Cross for this mission. "The President of the United States of America, authorized by Section 8742, Title 10, United States Code, awards the Air Force Cross to Captain Hal P. Henning for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force as an F-105 pilot in Southeast Asia on 27 October 1967. On that date, Capt Henning was the leader of a force of twenty F-105s assigned to attack an extremely vital military storage area in the vicinity of Hanoi, North Vietnam. En route to the target, his aircraft was extensively damaged by shrapnel from a surface-to-air missile. Without hesitation and with complete disregard for his own safety, Capt Henning continued on to the assigned target with his crippled aircraft. Diving through intense antiaircraft fire, delivering his bombs precisely on target, he was successful in heavily damaging the storage complex. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness, Captain Henning reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." ("Recipients of the Air Force Medal of Honor and Air Force Cross", by Eric R. Caubarreaux, pp 148 - 149.)

His flight records show he flew an F-105D for 3.0 hours on this date.

In October or November 1968, the TAC commander, Gen William W. Momyer, presented the award to Capt Henning who, by then, was assigned as an instructor pilot in the 563 TFS at McConnell AFB, Kansas.

Also participating, was a pilot named Wilson (probably Maj Harold D. Wilson) from the 44 TFS who flew F-105D 61-0068.

During the attack, a SAM shot down Capt Temperley, Warhawk 2, from the 469 TFS flying F-105D 61-0126. He became a POW, the fourth Air Force pilot the North Vietnamese captured on this day.

The Wild Weasel crew of Capt Rowland F. Smith, Jr. and EWO Capt David H. Williams from the 44 TFS at Korat flew as Warhawk 1 in F-105F 62-4446. Both pilot and EWO were also awarded the Air Force Cross. Capt Smith's award citation read, in part, "... with his aircraft hit and burning, Captain Smith exhibited the highest order of courage as he continued to fly through intense and accurate antiaircraft fire to attack and destroy a hostile surface-to-air missile complex that was threatening a large F-105 strike force. With his aircraft still in flames, he remained in the target area while initiating rescue efforts for his downed wingman. Captain Smith then flew his crippled

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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aircraft 300 miles to a skillful emergency landing ... ". (Extract from "For Extraordinary Heroism - The Air Force Cross" by Maj Jeffery B. Floyd, provided by Ron Thurlow.) The wording of the AFC citation for Capt Williams was nearly identical; the only changes reflected his role as EWO.

On 12 August 1968, General William W. Momyer, TAC commander, presented the award to Captain Smith.

Four 34 TFS pilots in "Hatchet" flight formed a flak suppression flight for the strike near Bac Mai airfield. The flight left Korat at 14:35 on the mission, which lasted 3.8 hours. The lineup was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith flying F-105D 62-4270
- #2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 61-0134 on his 10th combat mission.
- #3 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr. flying 61-0194
- #4 - Capt Irving E. LeVine flying 58-1157

Over 42 ½ years later, Jake Shuler described how he flew this mission. "My 9th mission on 26 October had partially restored my self-confidence following the total depletion of same during my 8th mission during which I inadvertently released my ordinance over the Gulf of Tonkin on the way to the Thanh Moi Railroad Yard northeast of Hanoi. ... The opportunity to continue the restoration process availed itself on the afternoon of 27 October, my third trip to Route Pack VI (RP-6), but my first trip 'downtown', Hanoi that is.

"I was scheduled to fly on Lt. Col. Bob Smith's wing as Hatchet 2 (Bob was soon to become the 34th TFS Commander upon George Clausen's rotation back to the States). Buddy Barner was to fly as Hatchet 3 with Irv LeVine on his wing as Hatchet 4. Hatchet Flight was to be the flak suppression flight in the Olympia Strike Force, each of us carrying six 750 pound canisters of cluster bomb units (CBU's). The other twelve aircraft in Olympic, Vegas, and Crossbow Flights each carried six 750 pound bombs.

"The flight planning, briefings, 14:10 engine start, 14:35 takeoff, join-up, and pre-strike refueling thankfully went without a hitch. The only thing out of the ordinary was being notified at the mission briefing that Colonel John Flynn, our Vice Wing Commander, had been shot down over Hanoi that morning -- my apprehension factor kicked up a notch.

"The primary target was the Bac Mai Storage Area, which is located on the southern edge of Hanoi and abuts the Bac Mai Airfield to the southeast .... Hatchet Flight was assigned to drop its CBU's on four gun emplacements adjacent to the Bac Mai runway. ...

"Pre-strike refueling occurred over Thailand and our route to the target took us over Laos with a final heading to the target of 064 degrees and a left roll-in. For a fleeting moment while passing over the mountains of southwestern NVN and looking in the distance at the Red River Valley, I marveled at the beauty of the landscape below, but reality set in abruptly when, about twenty miles out, the tone of a SAM site radar began to buzz in my helmet earphones. At this point, time seemed to speed up exponentially along with my heart and respiration rates. Instincts kicked in and I realized that my only chance to successfully complete this mission was to hang on to Bob Smith's wing. When 85 MM shells starting exploding at our elevation but ahead of the Strike Force, the Force Commander gave the call to plug in the afterburner (AB) and begin a climb. It was amazing to see the 85 MM bursts climb with us but thankfully staying slightly below.

"Soon after encountering the 85 MM flak, SAM launches were called out. In the continuing blur of the moment, I do recall seeing one SAM launch from just south of Hanoi and one SAM passing through the Strike Force formation without exploding. During mission debriefing I was informed that there were more.

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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"The Strike Force Commander made the call to 'take it down' (one of several tactics designed to defeat the SAM) and Bob Smith responded by 'pushing over'. Almost immediately I heard the call, something to the effect, 'Hatchet Two you are on fire, eject'. The slight negative G's on my aircraft caused fuel to flow from the fuel vent and the flame of the AB ignited the fuel resulting in what was commonly called 'torching'. Even though I was in a highly stressed state of mind, I was able to conclude that I still had a good airplane since I had felt no impacts, there was no fire warning light or any other warning lights for that matter, and there was no smoke or fumes in the cockpit. I elected to stay with the airplane.

"After roll-in and establishing the 60-degree dive angle on Bob's wing, I took my eyes off of his aircraft to acquire a visual on my target. To my amazement and relief, I found my sight reticule right on the northwest end of the runway, which was his target. Pushing forward on the stick slightly my target was easily acquired and I pickled my CBU's at 9,500 feet simultaneously plugging in AB again and pulling out of the dive and beginning the target egress process.

"The Thud accelerates quite rapidly in AB and soon I could not see out the sides or top of my canopy due to condensation. This situation required me to keep Bob in front of me and jink with him. Even in min-burner I found that I was overtaking him and came out of burner. Buddy Barner, flying not far behind me, saw this and said, 'Keep it in burner two'. When I pressed the mike button to respond 'roger', my larynx was so dry from hyperventilation it stuck together and I think my transmission sounded something like 'RAAAAAAK'.

"On the way to the tankers for post-strike refueling, I was able calm down and reflect somewhat on my performance. Only one major screw-up and that occurred during roll-in. Instead of staying on Bob's left wing as he rolled in to the left, I pulled up slightly then rolled left temporarily losing sight of him. Not good and not pleasing to Bob. So after dropping off of the tanker and on our way back to Korat, we practiced the 4-ship roll-in maneuver, I'm sure much to the consternation of Buddy and Irv. Can't say why I made such a bonehead move since I had performed it right on my 8th mission, albeit without bombs. Thankfully, it was not to happen again during my next 36 missions. Also following this mission I found the ability to remain reasonably calm and more focused with better situational awareness."

Capt Shuler was nominated for the Silver Star but "... I was awarded my one and only DFC." His award nomination read, "Captain Shuler distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 combat strike pilot in SEA on 27 Oct. '67.

"Capt Shuler was number two man in Hatchet flight, which was designated the flak suppression flight of Olympia Force. Olympia Force consisted of five flights of F-105 Thunderchiefs and was ordered to attack the Bac Mai Storage Area at Hanoi. Located on the southern edge of Hanoi and 39 NM north west of Nam Dinh, Bac Mai Storage Area abuts Bac Mai Airfield to the southeast. Tightly packed warehouses, vehicle maintenance buildings make up the largest single facility of its kind in NVN and had never previously been attacked. The target area is heavily defended by numerous surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites and was also ringed by over 2000 antiaircraft batteries of 37, 57, and 85 MM guns that are so dispersed as to give maximum coverage and overlap of fire patterns to the adjacent sites.

"Captain Shuler was ordered to attack designated reveted, hard AAA sites deployed along the southwest perimeter of the runway at Bac Mai Airfield. By effectively suppressing these flak sites, the main strike force was able to follow Hatchet Flight into the target area and successfully destroy it.

"Approximately twenty miles prior to the target area, missiles were sighted in a head on attack on

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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Captain Shuler's aircraft and Hatchet Flight. On 'pushing-over' in a typical SAM evasive maneuver, negative G's caused fuel to dump and it ignited behind Captain Shuler's aircraft, giving the effect of the aircraft being on fire. Told to 'eject' by other aircraft in the force, Captain Shuler coolly assessed the situation. Calmly regaining his position in the flight's protective Pod formation, he determined his aircraft to be sound and that the fire was out, then pressed on to the target. In spite of a steady barrage of missiles and antiaircraft fire, Captain Shuler positioning his aircraft for optimum target acquisition and rolled in. Ignoring the intense and accurate antiaircraft barrage that buffeted his aircraft, Captain Shuler, with total disregard for his personal safety, pressed the attack on the designated gun positions, delivering his ordinance with maximum destructive force, he single handedly succeeded in silencing 9 reveted gun positions.

"Egressing from the target area, Captain Shuler quickly rejoined his flight lead in a formation that would provide maximum protection for the rest of his flight members while maneuvering through continuous heavy 85, 57, and 37 MM barrages. Hatchet Flight turned back into the high threat area to locate the position of a downed pilot for possible rescue. The pilot position was located and voice contact established at which point Hatchet Flight was forced to withdraw because of fuel considerations. Orbiting with the post-strike tankers for possible Res Cap, Hatchet Flight was subsequently RTB'd because of approaching darkness and temporary curtailment of the rescue attempt.

"The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Captain Shuler reflect great credit upon himself and the USAF." (Jake Shuler, combat mission spreadsheet & e-mail 5 July 2010)

Capt Shuler also received the Air Medal for the period 7 - 27 October 1967. (Jake Shuler medal citation via e-mail 11 Jan 2011)

Capt LeVine, "Hatchet 04", received a Silver Star for the mission. "Captain Irving E. LeVine distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force over North Vietnam on 27 October 1967. On that date, Captain LeVine silenced eight active antiaircraft guns on an airfield near Hanoi, greatly reducing the hazard to the following three flights of the mission force. Disregarding the intense, concentrated flak barrage, interspersed with more than twenty surface-to-air missiles, he accurately bombed the large site, destroying the guns and ammunition supply. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Captain LeVine has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Irv LeVine Citation in letter received 16 Apr 10.)

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr from the 34 TFS flew his 9th combat mission against the Bac Mai storage complex. He flew as "Crossbow 02" on his 9th combat mission. "4 buildings destroyed/7 damaged/observed 10 SAMs - DFC - Warhawk 2 down (SAM)" (Rufus Dye Mission History log)

*Chronology of Seventh Air Force 1 July 1967 - 30 June 1968, pg 5 & National Archives camera list, record number NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B & Thunderchief Worldwide Report Vol IV no 4, December 1968.*

#### 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:

- #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

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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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 Udorn." 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.*

**05-Nov-67**

1441

"Pilots from Korat's 388 TFW and the 355 TFW at Takhli, claimed 36 craters on the runway at Phuc Yen Airfield following a strike on 5 November. Ninety 750-pound bombs (M117s), six 500-pound bombs and 80 CBUs were reported expended in the attack. Five AAA sites were estimated damaged or destroyed, and confirmed by KA-71 strike photography. Post-strike photography reflected repair efforts, a servicable taxiway and the runway unserviceable." (7 Air Force Weekly Air Intelligence Summary (WAIS), 67-46 dated 11 Nov 67, for week of 3 - 9 Nov 1967, pg 3.)

Taking advantage of the clearer weather in the afternoon, F-105s from the 388 TFW, Korat, and the 355 TFW from Takhli struck Phuc Yen MiG airfield (JCS 6) (BE 616-8520) for the third time since their first attacks on 24 and 25 October 1967. This time Takhli lost two F-105s -- a "D" flown by Capt Billy R. Sparks, Jr. from the 357 TFS, and a Wild Weasel "F" crewed by Maj Dick Dutton and EWO Capt Glenn Cobeil from the 333 TFS.

"During this attack, two MiG-17s were damaged on the ground." (Chronology of Seventh Air Force 1 July 1967 - 30 June 1968, pg 6.)

(NOTE: Much of 355 TFW OPREP from which part of the following was taken is illegible)

Four of the flights, "Wildcat", "Wolf", "Marlin", and "Scotch" were strike flights, and the fifth, "Red Dog", was a Wild Weasel flight. "Marlin Lead" and the Wild Weasel F-105F of "Red Dog 4" were lost to AAA during this mission. Both the pilot and EWO of the Wild Weasel crew (Maj Dutton and Capt Cobeil) were captured. "Marlin Lead" (Capt Sparks) was rescued.

At 0825Z, the four F-105Ds in "Wildcat" flight dropped two CBU-24s on the first target, an (illegible) area in RP-6A, North Vietnam. Pilots reported 100% of their ordnance hit the target area but there were no secondaries and they could not provide BDA due to evasive tactics. The flight encountered heavy AAA (illegible).

The primary target struck was Phuc Yen airfield, (JCS 6), the third time F-105s hit this target since 24 October. Pilots from the 357 TFW were in this raid. Intense, accurate barrages of 37/57/85-mm AAA blanketed the area. Beginning at 0808Z with "Marlin" flight, the four strike flights dropped a total of four MK-118s and twenty CBU-24s on the airfield. After dropping his ordnance, "Marlin 1" was hit and downed by flak. At 0823Z, the four F-105Ds in "Scotch" flight used CBUs to suppress active flak sites adjacent to the airfield.

Next over the target, at 0827Z, were the four F-105Ds in "Wolf" flight. The strike pilots reported direct hits on the hanger in Area 4 and both the (illegible). After the flights left the target, they began a RESCAP for "Marlin 1" at coordinates 21-26N and 104-51E in RP-5. The three pilots in "Marlin" flight capped between 0835Z and 1008Z and were assisted by the pilots in "Scotch" flight

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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between 0915Z and 0940Z. The RESCAP flights maintained a high and low cell and established voice contact with "Marlin 1" on the ground. The three pilots in "Marlin" flight ran short of fuel and had to depart the area after the A-1 Sandys arrived. However, "Marlin 3" returned and pinpointed the area for the Jolly Green helicopter crew who succeeded in picking up the downed pilot.

Strike camera photos from the second flight over the target showed bomb craters on the runway from the first flight. (CINCPAC briefing)

The F-105Fs in "Red Dog" flight struck two targets. Their first target at 0835Z was a suspected military area at coordinates 20-27N and 105-13E in RP-5. They dropped one CBU-24 and one CBU-29 on the area but did not see their bomb impacts. At 0841Z, they dropped two CBU-24s and two CBU-29s on a segment of Route 13 at 21-19N and 104-46E, also in RP-5, and, again, did not see their bomb impacts. After "Red Dog 4" was downed, the other three members of the flight circled the area and heard a good beeper signal but could not raise either of the downed crew on voice. After refueling once, the flight was relieved on RESCAP by "Ozark" flight.

(Bottom of OPREP is missing)

One day after their return from R&R, Maj Bruce Stocks and EWO Maj Frank Moyer from the 333 TFS were the crew leading the "Red Dog" Wild Weasel flight from Takhli. They had also led Takhli's Wild Weasels on the first Phuc Yen airfield strike on 24 October. This was Maj Moyer's 50th combat mission. In his diary, he described what happened this time. "We were to lead the late go, so slept in. Went to TOC at 0900 to plan our lead & worked on it right until brief time at 1120; the combination of Pri. & 1st Alt. were tough! Well, we flew it! Got a valid launch signal near Phuc Yen, & Sparky got hit taking it into the weeds. Made it south of the Red [River] before he had to punch out because of fire & was rescued; back to Takhli near midnight."

"But Dutton & Cobeil, our newest Weasel crew & flying #4 slot, also went to the weeds & were set afire. They didn't make it to the Red but did manage to bail out before the plane blew up just north of Phu Tho. We stayed with them almost until their chutes reached the ground but couldn't stay longer because of fuel. Set up Rescap operation, then went out for tanker. Sent our #3 man on home, then we & #2 met a Mig Cap flight over Channel 97 [tacan station] to go back into the area. Orbited their area trying to establish radio contact with them, but couldn't, 'til we were too low on fuel to stay longer, so met emergency tanker for limited refueling & flew home at over 30,000 ft to save fuel. Came in VFR [visual flight rules] with barely 2,000 lbs left - ca 20 min. So apparently 2 good guys are prisoners because of my "Valid Launch" call. And Sparky, being at about 140 missions & having punched out before, will go home with no more combat. Lousy day to mark the halfway point -Mission #50."

Maj Moyer was awarded the Second Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross for his being " ... directly responsible for the safe recovery of a downed aircrew in a very hostile area." (Frank Moyer, letter to Ron Thurlow, 21 Sep 2001).

Lt Col Robert W. Smith, the 34 TFS commander led Korat's strike force in the third attack against Phuc Yen Airfield (JCS 6). "I was Strike Force Commander to Phuc Yen Airport for a return match with the enemy, on 5 November, just a couple weeks after our first attack there. This time our job was to hit the runway, which had been assigned to the 355th wing on our first strike there. We had made strides in paying more attention to our attacks and the results were evident in our strike photos.

"At that early stage, I found time to annotate a map with some of my strike mission notes and write home to Martha to share with her some of what we were doing, none of which was classified. That was a practice I quit as a result of the increasing demands on my time. From that mission, I

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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included a series of three strike camera shots of our attack, which I had annotated.

"I had been pleased, when the KA-70 strike photos confirmed that my six 750's hit squarely on the very middle of the runway, but more excited about the improving results by the flight. The outcome was far better than before, encouraging me in our efforts to improve weapons delivery." (Bob Smith's autobiography on line at [http://www.kalimera.org/nf104/ab/ch\\_5/v.html](http://www.kalimera.org/nf104/ab/ch_5/v.html))

1Lt Earl J. Henderson from the 469 TFS from Korat flew on the Phuc Yen strike. It was his 34th combat mission into North Vietnam.

"Target: Phuc Yen airfield  
"Armament: 6x750 .025

"Bad again at Phuc Yen. They were waiting for us today. Flak pretty bad. Lead hit twice. Once in canopy. Got glass in neck. No one shot down in our group. Takhli lost two, got one guy out. We had best bombs I've ever seen. Many, many craters on runway." His flight lead was Lt Col William C. Decker, the squadron Operations Officer. He "... was hit by a 12.75 cal round that came through the top of the canopy while flying straight and level. We surmised that it was a spent round falling. I think it embedded in the seat head rest. Canopy glass hit Lt Col Decker in the neck and caused some minor injuries, but he got a purple heart for his troubles." (Earl Henderson, e-mail 3 August 2009.)

Lt Henderson received the Distinguished Flying Cross (1 OLC) for this mission. "... Lieutenant Henderson was a member of a flight of four F-105s assigned to attack the most vital airfield in North Vietnam. Flying through intense antiaircraft fire, he dropped his bombs precisely on the runway and rendered it completely unserviceable. When his flight leader's aircraft was heavily damaged by antiaircraft fire, Lieutenant Henderson joined in close formation and escorted him back out across 140 miles of hostile territory to a safe recovery. ..." (Earl Henderson, combat diary and award citation.)

Post-strike coverage from 6 November revealed numerous craters on the runway but repair work had already started. Two MiGs in Area G, damaged during the 24 October strike, were still in the same place but two of the MiGs that had been damaged in Area H, the northern revetments, had been removed. Additional photography obtained on 20 November, two weeks after today's strike, confirmed the runway was back in operation. (Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 1 - 15 November 1967.)

*355 TFW JOPREP JIFFY DOI ??? OPREP-4/051 in USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1398 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1757 & Diary and Combat Log of Frank N. Moyer, 4 Jun 67 - 15 Mar 68.*

**06-Nov-67**

3464

Air Force planes bombed targets along the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2). The targets were:

1). F-105s from the 388 TFW hit the Kep railroad yards (BE 616-01371) (ART 1270) at 21-24-57N and 106-17-46E. BDA photos from 7 November showed all rails in Area 2 were cut. "... Three flak suppression and nine strike F-105s from Korat delivered 12 CBU 24s, three CBU-29s and 46 M117s. Twelve freight cars were struck in the trans-shipment yard, with four reported damaged, and three rail cuts reported. Smoke precluded BDA from the forwarding yard." (7 Air Force Weekly Air Intelligence Summary (WAIS), 67-46 dated 11 Nov 67, for week of 3 - 9 Nov 1967, pg 4.)

The sequence of the call signs of the flights from Korat were: "Hornet", "Locust", "Fresno", "Dallas", and "Ozark".

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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The primary target of "Locust" flight from the 34 TFS was the Kep Railroad Yard. Their tertiary target was at 21-33N and 105-51E. The flight took off at 13:50. Its lineup was:

#1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith flying F-105D 58-1157

#2 - Capt Carl William Lasiter flying 60-5376

#3 - 1Lt David B. Waldrop III flying 62-4361

#4 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 62-4221 on his 16th combat mission. He logged 3.8 hours flying time and received the Air Medal (4th OLC). "Capt Jacob C. Shuler distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight over Southeast Asia on 6 November 1967. On that date, he superbly accomplished a highly intricate mission to support Free World forces that were combating aggression. His energetic application of his knowledge and skill were significant factors that contributed greatly to furthering United States goals in Southeast Asia. His professional skill and airmanship reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Jake Shuler mission log spreadsheet and mission card and Award Citation.)

2). The Lang Nac railroad bridge (BE 616-00811) at 21-41-15N and 106-37-20E. BDA photos from 7 November revealed the bridge was still serviceable. Another Lang Nac railroad bridge (BE 616-01181) at 21-41-01N and 106-36-50E. BDA photos from 7 November revealed the bridge was still serviceable. "Smoke precluded BDA for 8 TFW strikes against the two Lang Nac Railroad Bridges." (7 Air Force Weekly Air Intelligence Summary (WAIS), 67-46 dated 11 Nov 67, for week of 3 - 9 Nov 1967, pg 4.)

3). Thirty MK-36 mines were seeded along the Canal des Rapides bridge (JCS 13). "The Hanoi Railroad Bridge over the Canal des Rapides was the target area for 30 MK-36 Destructors seeded in the canal by a flight of Ubon-based F-4s." (7 Air Force Weekly Air Intelligence Summary (WAIS), 67-46 dated 11 Nov 67, for week of 3 - 9 Nov 1967, pg 4.)

*Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 1 - 15 November 1967 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1757.*

#### 19-Nov-67

1445

F-105s from the 388 TFW struck rolling stock on the Yen Vien railroad classification yard (JCS 19) in North Vietnam. The yard was another RT-57 add-on target approved on 8 November. At the time of the strike, the yard held 52 pieces of rolling stock.

The 388 TFW also struck the Thuy Phoung barge construction yard north of Hanoi. Lt Col Robert W. Smith from the 34 TFS was the strike force lead. He was awarded the Air Force Cross for "extraordinary heroism" in leading this mission. "... Colonel Smith led a strike force of twenty F-105 and four F-4 aircraft to the vicinity of Hanoi for the initial strike on an important military target. Colonel Smith gallantly led his force through a hostile aircraft attack, an awesome and extended attack by missiles which downed two aircraft, and into the heavy antiaircraft defenses to strike crippling blows to the assigned target and to a large active surface-to-air missile site. Colonel Smith never wavered from his goal, and with complete disregard for his life, displayed great courage and determined leadership to accomplish an extremely hazardous and difficult mission ...".

Col Smith received the award on 17 August 1968 under CB-161, DAF.

Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe from the 34 TFS received the Distinguished Flying Cross (6th OLC) for heroism on his mission today, his 91st over North Vietnam. He flew for 3.3 hours. "... Capt Hoppe was the flight leader of the flak suppression flight which attacked a vital military target in the vicinity of Hanoi. Braving hostile aircraft, and intense barrage of surface to air missiles, and concentrated, accurate antiaircraft fire, Captain Hoppe headed his flight in the successful neutralization of a

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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surface to air missile site and several antiaircraft gun sites. ..." (Award citation provided by Larry Hoppe, May 2010, and his AF Form 5.)

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., also from the 34 TFS, flew his 14th mission as "Dallas 04" against the Thuy Phuong barge yard. "Released safe due UI. Actf/57/85 mm." (Rufus Dye Mission History log.)

1Lt Earl J. Henderson, 469 TFS, supported the attack on the barge yard. It was his 41st combat mission into North Vietnam.

"Target: Barge Yard near Hanoi.  
"Armament: 6x500# 1xAGM-45.

"Wild Weasel flight. Weather overcast up to target. Many, many SAMs -- 20 or more. We pulled up and launched five Shrikes. Then dodged a few SAMs. Rolled in on SAM site that had just fired. Clobbered it. Egressed at 1,000 feet and Mach 1.2. We lost two airplanes to direct hits by SAMs. They must be reading through the pods!"

Lt Henderson received the Distinguished Flying Cross (2nd OLC) for this mission. "...Lieutenant Henderson was a member of a flight of four aircraft assigned to suppress the surface-to-air missile sites in support of a strike against a vital target in the most heavily defended area of North Vietnam. While evading numerous missiles, which were tracking his aircraft, he located and began a diving attack on a missile site that had just fired. Bombing from a dangerously low altitude, he delivered his ordnance directly on the center of the site, almost totally destroying the complex. ..." (Earl Henderson, combat diary and award citation.)

Post-strike film from 20 November showed 4 buildings in the area were damaged or destroyed.

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1757 & Extract from "For Extraordinary Heroism - The Air Force Cross" by Maj Jeffery B. Floyd, provided by Ron Thurlow & Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 16 - 30 November 1967..*

#### 25-Nov-67

6712

The 388 TFW flew an afternoon Commando Club mission from Korat RTAFB. The sequence of the flights was:

"Cactus" Iron Hand. Refueled from Red Anchor 46  
"Ozark" Iron Hand. Refueled from Red Anchor 42  
"Scuba". Refueled from Red Anchor 40  
"Locust". Refueled from Red Anchor 43  
"Bass". Refueled from Red Anchor 41  
"Gator". Refueled from Red Anchor 44

The 34 TFS launched the four-ship "Scuba" flight at 13:55 for a TOT of 15:30. The flight lineup was:

#1 - Maj William J. King flying F-105D 58-1157  
#2 - Capt Harry Guy Paddon III flying 61-0068  
#3 - Maj Donald W. Revers flying 60-0518  
#4 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 61-0161 on his 23rd combat mission.  
Spare - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr. in 60-0435

Jake Shuler recalled details of the mission. "This was apparently a strike force Commando Club mission of which I do not recall any particular details. Although the mission itself was not exciting, the landing pattern was. As Jim King positioned our flight of four on initial, we heard Col. James L.

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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Stewart, 388th TFW Assistant DO, call an engine problem on a long final, but he did not declare an 'emergency'. Being low on fuel, since our mission did not call for post-strike refueling, Jim elected to continue with our pattern and pitched out. As I initiated my turn to final, I saw Col. Stewart about a mile out and, since he had still not declared an 'emergency', and I would have been in a 'minimum fuel' situation if I initiated a 'go around', I continued my turn to final and final approach. Purposefully, I landed on the far right side of the runway allowing plenty of room for Col. Stewart to land on the left side. When I was about half way down the runway on roll-out, I heard Col. Stewart in an irritated tone call 'going around' plus some other choice, harsh words. As he advanced the throttle, a very loud and very abnormal noise emanated from his engine and as he passed me (at an altitude of about 500' and about 500' left of the runway), now about two thirds down the runway, I heard the tower on guard channel (I think it was Doug Beyer on tower duty) call Col. Stewart's call sign and 'eject, eject, eject'. Thankfully, Col. Stewart was able to nurse his plane around in a circling approach and land safely. I think he called an 'emergency' during the circling approach. Needless to say, Bob Smith, [Lt Col Robert W. Smith] our soon to be Squadron Commander had a 'conversation' with our flight prior to our mission debriefing. In hindsight, there is no doubt that I should have gone around and requested a 'closed pattern'. I had enough fuel to do so.

"Of further note, Major William J. "Jim" King, Jr. was a T-38 IP (Kingfish) at Webb AFB, Falcon Flight. I flew with him several times as a student -- he taught me how to minimize induced drag during over- the-top maneuvers. Small world."

*Jake Shuler 25 Nov 67 mission card and e-mail 11 Jan 2011*

#### 01-Dec-67

1306

Lt Col Robert W. Smith replaced Maj George G. Clausen as commander of the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

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

#### 12-Dec-67

4601

Fourteen flights of F-105s from Takhli and Korat and F-4s from Ubon targeted Kep Railroad Yards at 21-25N and 106-18E and Kep Air Field (JCS 9.1) at 21-23N and 106-16E in Route Pack 6B.

The strike force had a total of 56 aircraft that included F-105 Iron Hands from Takhli, one F-105 flak suppression flight from Takhli, three F-105 strike flights from Korat, and two F-4C MiG CAP flights from Ubon. One MiG CAP flight was supporting the Iron Hand flight, and the other supported the flak suppression and strike flights.

The aircraft departed their bases, refueled over the Gulf of Tonkin, joined up, turned left at the Ile Madeleine, and headed inland north of MiG Ridge. While the strike force was over water, DEEP SEA warned of MiGs airborne from Phuc Yen and later from Kep and Haiphong.

Solid undercast at 8,000 feet caused the Takhli F-105 strike flights to weather abort at 0845L just short of the northeast railroad, followed shortly afterwards by Korat's strike flights. The F-4C MiG CAP aircraft continued ahead to search for MiGs.

One of the MiG CAP flights and two of Korat's egressing F-105 strike flights and its flak suppression flight (Hatchet Flight) encountered MiG-21s. MiG CAP number three fired three AIM-7 missiles at a MiG but all three missiles failed. The F-4C pilot and his wingman pursued the MiG-21 until they received a warning call and broke off 10 to 15 miles from the Chinese border.

A "dirty gray/black" MiG-21 fired an ATOL missile at number four F-105 in Korat's flak suppression flight. "The ATOL exploded just aft of [the plane's] right wing, blowing off half the external fuel tank, igniting the fuel, punching two holes in the right horizontal stabilizer, and tearing the right half of the

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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fuselage from the flap on back." (Red Baron Report)

This pilot was Capt Douglas A. Beyer, "Hatchet 04" from the 34 TFS flying F-105D 60-0512. He was " ... a 100-mission pilot who was attached to the 388 TFW. [He] said that during a mission near the Kep Airfield an air-to-air missile, fired at his aircraft by a MiG-21, exploded directly behind him. 'Fragments struck the right drop tank causing it to explode,' the pilot recalled. Although shrapnel also damaged the fuselage and the alternate and utility hydraulic systems were lost, Byer was able to safely return to a friendly base. ... " The pilot landed at Da Nang AB, South Vietnam. A photo of the plane with the "JJ" tail code, showed holes along the right side of the aft fuselage above and below the stabilator. He received the DFC (3rd OLC) for this mission. (USAF microfilm AVH-7 & Thunderchief Worldwide Report Vol III No 11 July 1968.)

"Hatchet 02", Capt Irving E. LeVine, 34 TFS, fired 121 rounds at the same MiG-21 at point-blank range, 90-degree angle off without hitting the MiG. LeVine was 33 years old with 2,500 flying hours, 225 in the F-105, flying his 76th combat mission, 70 over North Vietnam.

During a Red Baron interview on 25 November 1970, he described his actions. "At first, that MiG looked like an F-4 with a bad paint job. It came up so lazy; most of the MiGs I'd seen had come up very fast, but this one didn't seem to be in any hurry at all until he suddenly snapped up and fired, like the snap-up they do with the F-89. I expected him to go to 35,000 feet and I started to roll right into him, nose down and I didn't think I'd be able to bring my nose up in time. Anyway, I ceased my roll, started up, and he simply made a lazy left bank just like he was on a GCA. At first I thought we were going to collide; I shoved the nose over as far as I could and hosed off the 20-mm rounds. It seemed like a tremendously long fighter. It was silver but not bright silver; there was a gray band of paint behind the cockpit and halfway on the wings and it looked like somebody made a quick attempt to camouflage it. He pulled around (to the right) to parallel my course and I thought if I barrel-rolled to the left I could pull in behind him but my main concern was to help number 4 (who was hit and burning)."

Capt LeVine accompanied Capt Beyer toward Danang where Beyer landed safely after his fire blew out. Capt LeVine flew on to Korat.

Doug Beyer's comments on his experience are posted on Robert W. Smith's autobiography web site. "Early on the morning of 12 Dec 67, we went through the normal mission briefings. Sam Armstrong, Irv LeVine and I were three members of the flight. My memory fades on the fourth. Target was Kep Airfield, northeast of Hanoi. We went the water route, hit the tankers, and entered the area south of Haiphong. The weather was solid, and we were in and out of the clouds the whole time. The Weasel flight kept us advised as to what they found - no breaks, anywhere.

"Finally, they called for a weather abort, and the strike force began a port turn to go feet wet again. About half way through the turn, someone yelled 'Lead, break left'. About eight or nine leads responded, what lead? About that time, I felt a heavy jolt at the rear of the aircraft, and the bird started a roll to the right. My first thought, this is the truth, was 'I don't like rice!' I corrected the attitude with normal aileron, no problem. I lit the burner, punched off the MER, and tried to get rid of both drop tanks. The left one jettisoned, but the right one remained with me.

"Sam joined up with me and gave me a quick rundown on what he could see. I was receiving constant vectors and distances to the coast from those guys we always heard, but never saw.

"As soon as I was feet wet, we turned south to Da Nang. As I began my penetration, I entered the clouds and was under GCA control. They advised me of deteriorating weather, with a rainstorm in progress. There was no problem controlling the aircraft, but not having a chance to run a control check, I had to press forward. I had no hydraulic brakes, but the [backup] air system was in good

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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shape. I broke out at about 500' with good visibility, hit the runway, popped the drag chute, and began braking to a stop. No problems.

"I opened the canopy, and slid down onto the wing. At that time, the aircraft began to move, and I thought I was in deep trouble. I was wrong. Ground crewmen already had a Euclid hooked up, and was towing me off the runway. First class service, to say the least!!

"Several hours after I landed, a friend of mine in the maintenance squadron called to say he had something he wanted to show me. He's also the guy that got the pictures of the aircraft for me.

"He met me at Base Ops, and handed me a rolleron that they had gotten out of the rear of my engine area. It had no serial numbers on it, so I assumed it had to be from an Atoll missile. One of the oldest master sergeants I've ever seen explained that the US had quit numbering the rollerons as well, and he was certain the rolleron was from a Sidewinder. Interesting.

"I hitched a ride back to Korat on a T-39 and, upon arrival, joined the squadron party, already in progress. At that point, Irv LeVine began to tell me exactly what had happened. He said that he had seen a MIG 21 pop up out of the clouds, hose off an air-to-air missile, and dive back down into the clouds. He further stated that he had gotten off some rounds of 20 mike mike, and felt sure he had hit the guy in the vertical stabilizer.

"Several days later, I got the pictures of the aircraft. One most noteworthy picture shows a hole in MY vertical stabilizer. The old master sergeant says Sidewinder rolleron. You can understand my doubts about what really occurred that day in December 1967, 35 ½ years ago!"  
([http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch\\_5/iv.html](http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch_5/iv.html))

Irv LeVine told how he remembered this mission. "We were inbound when an airborne abort was called. We had a solid undercast from the coast inland and it was several thousand feet below us. The sky was basically clear and visibility was 15 to 20 miles or more. Our flight did a right turn and headed for the coast. I saw no flak or SAMs. I was in a gentle right turn, almost level, and busy cleaning up the cockpit. Out of the corner of my right eye I saw an aircraft lazily climb out of the undercast a mile or so to my 3 o'clock position and it seemed to be moving rather slow. It was a mottled dark gray and I thought, 'It must be one of ours'. I was startled when it snapped up and fired a missile. The missile hit one of our flight and 70 feet of flame shot rearward from that plane. Radio chatter made me realize it was Doug Beyer's bird that was hit. I didn't know how badly but thought he might not make it to the coast. That fire was really burning and streaming rearward. At the same time I thought the MiG, like so many of the MiGs before him, was now going to grab for altitude and possibly head for China. I hoped to get on his tail and get a shot before he could escape to a much higher altitude. I dumped my bombs and hustled getting my switches to 'Guns Air', lower my seat, get into burner while keeping an eye on the MiG all at the same time. To my surprise, he didn't keep climbing but swung into a 90-degree left turn that would take him across my path but well below me. I came out of burner and shoved the nose of my bird down hard. As he started his turn, my bird's nose was well above the horizon at a 45 to 50-degree angle. The Thud reacted perfectly and I thought we were going to collide. He passed directly across my line of flight and just below me. I pulled the trigger as he shot by but I don't think he even knew I was there. He certainly didn't try to take any evasive action or try to engage me. He reversed to his right leveling off a couple thousand feet above me and appeared to be watching Doug's burning aircraft. I felt confident doing the barrel roll attack and for a moment I considered trying one to get at his 6 o'clock position. I was low at about his 5 o'clock position and we were on approximately the same heading. Guilt took over at the same time and told me my job was to guard Doug's ass as he headed for feet wet. I turned hard to my right and using burner caught up with them. I stayed in a weave pattern behind Doug until we were well out over the water and headed south. He went south to Danang and I RTB'd" (Irv LeVine, letter received 16 April 2010.)

# Robert W. Smith

## F-105 History

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The four pilots in "Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS were targeted against Kep Airfield. The Korat flight took off at 0555 and flew for 3 hours 50 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Donald W. Revers
- #2 - Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot (KIA 14 Feb 68)
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0449
- #4 - Capt Sam P. Morgan

It was Maj Armstrong's 34th combat mission. "This was the first Pack VI mission for me in 3 weeks. The weather was too bad around Hanoi so we were sent to Kep Airfield, the water route. I was Deputy Force Commander for this force but I lost my DC generator on the tanker and finally got it reset. After that I had to turn off all my navigation equipment to keep it on the line. Don Revers lost his AC generator just before landfall so Sam Morgan wound up leading the force. We were 5 minutes behind Takhli going in. The weather was completely undercast all up the Gulf and inland. Takhli made a weather abort about 15 miles from Kep and we did also a minute later. Consequently, we were all turning through the same airspace. About halfway through the turn back to the coast, we were jumped by MiG-21s. They fired missiles. One hit Hatchet #4, Doug Beyer, but he landed at Danang OK. Some flame shot out of Don Revers' airplane and we thought he was hit but apparently not. What a fiasco. We shouldn't have been sent up there in that weather." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 14)

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong elaborated on this mission. "The weather over Pack VIA was generally bad so most of the missions were flown in flights into Laos or Pack I. The next Pack VIA mission was on the Kep Airfield Northeast of Hanoi. It was primarily a MiG-17 base. The weather was bad so we wound up doing a weather abort where we could bank only 20 degrees without compromising the effectiveness of our jamming pods. After having seen SA-2's coming up through the clouds and hitting aircraft like they did on 18 November, taking this long to turn and exit the area seemed like an eternity! No SA-2's were fired but two MiG-21's intercepted us and fired a heat seeker which impacted Doug Beyer's aircraft causing him to land at Danang with the missile sticking in the side of his aircraft." (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished manuscript, chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 20.

*Red Baron II Report, Event 69, pp 134 - 145 & 7 Air Force Weekly Air Intelligence Summary (WAIS), 67-51 dated 16 Dec 67, for week of 8 - 14 Dec 1967, pg 10.*

**21-Dec-67**

4855

Four pilots from the 34 TFS of "Scuba" flight took off from Korat at 14:30 on a mission to bomb a target in northern Laos. They refueled from Red Anchor 40. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 59-1759
- #2 - Capt Lawrence R. Klinestiver flying F-105D 62-4248
- #3 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander flying F-105D 60-0462
- #4 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying F-105D 62-4270 on his 32nd mission.
- Spare - Maj Kenneth W. Mays in 60-0449

It was Maj Armstrong's 41st combat mission. "This was to be my first flight as Mission Commander of the strike force. The weather was bad up in Pack VI so we went as individual flights instead up into northern Laos to work with a FAC. We had to wait for about 20 minutes orbiting the target, just penetrating Pack IV for a counter. We finally hit a road segment. All four of us put our bombs squarely on the target. Other than that, an uneventful mission." The flight lasted 2.7 hours.

Jake Shuler described how he remembered the mission. "Due to bad weather over the primary target, we were directed to work with FACs, Firefly 17 & 18, target 120 degrees 20 NM from

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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Channel 97. We may have also worked with Raven FACs 40 & 41 with a time on target of 1510 hours, both targets in northern Laos."

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. in another flight with the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, flew his 50th combat mission, this one into Laos and Route Pack 2. He struck some trucks.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Gator 3" against a truck park in the Barrel Roll region of Laos. "100%/ 1 large secondary." It was his 22nd combat mission.

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 17 & Jake Shuler's mission card and e-mail 11 Jan 2011 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 21 Dec 67 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

#### 28-Dec-67

4857

The 34 TFS at Korat launched the four-ship "Scuba" flight into North Vietnam. The flight took off at 1430 and returned after flying for 2 hours 45 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0505
- #2 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flying mission #54
- #3 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #4 - Capt Irving E. LeVine

This was Maj Armstrong's 43rd combat mission. "I was supposed to be Mission Commander again today but the weather continued to be bad so everybody went to their first alternate target. Ours was a Commando Club on a target 25 miles west of Channel 97. We had approval before hand to swing up into North Vietnam after bomb drop to see if we could draw some MiGs and keep them off the second flight 30 minutes behind us going to Hoa Lac. We trolled up to about 20 miles NE of Phu Tho and no MiGs came up. We had two missiles fired at us on the way back down south. They didn't look like SAM bursts, they were grayish-white. No MiGs were known to come up and no missiles were fired on the flight going to Hoa Lac. We finally gave up and came home."

Maj Dickson's comment on his after-mission cigar band was "MiG hunt. Only SAMs."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 18 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 28 Dec 67.*

#### 30-Dec-67

6717

The four pilots in "Rainbow" flight from the 34 TFS took off at 06:15 and refueled with Blue Anchor 15. Their lineup was:

- #1 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW Assistant DO, flying F-105D 60-0449
- #2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 60-0435
- #3 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS commander, flying 62-4270
- #4 - Capt Hugh W. Davis flying 60-0530

It was Capt Shuler's 39th mission. "This was a Combat Sky Spot mission flown to target coordinates 17-22N and 106-13E, the Ho Chi Minh Trail in southern Laos, about 50 NM due west of Dong Hoi."

*Jake Shuler 30 Dec 67 mission card and e-mail 11 Jan 2011.*

#### 01-Jan-68

3963

During the period January - March 1968, the following officers commanded the three fighter squadrons at the 388 TFW:

34 TFS -- Lt Col Robert W. Smith

# Robert W. Smith

## F-105 History

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44 TFS -- Lt Col Robert A. Evans  
469 TFS -- Lt Col William C. Decker

*388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584, frames 0618.*

### 15-Jan-68

3865

F-105s from the 388 TFW bombed the Thai Nguyen iron and steel complex (JCS 76) using Commando Club radar. There was no BDA due to weather.

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS attacked the Thai Nguyen Army Barracks (JCS 60) in Route Pack 6A. The flight took off at 0630. Its flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4248
- #2 - Capt Carl William Lasiter (POW 4 Feb 68)
- #3 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr., 34 TFS Ops Officer
- #4 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander

This was Maj Armstrong's 55th combat mission. "I was Mission Commander again today but the weather in VI was bad so we went first alternate. Our flight, along with 8 F-4s and an Iron Hand flight, went Commando Club to Thai Nguyen Army Barracks. We went in and dropped with no MiG or SAM reaction. An easy red mark." Their mission lasted 2 hours 45 minutes.

*388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584, frames 0460 and 0497 & Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 22 - 23.*

### 14-Feb-68

4876

"Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS was one of the Korat flights that struck the Canal des Rapides bridge (JCS 13) in downtown Hanoi. The flight took off at 13:55. Its line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #2 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0464
- #4 - Capt Gary G. Durkee

This was Maj Armstrong's 66th combat mission. "The target was the Hanoi Railroad & Hiway Bridge [JCS 13]. The weather was clear for the first time in several weeks. We came up the delta into the target. Col Smith inadvertently dropped his bombs crossing the coast. The visibility was restricted but we picked up the target about 20 miles out. I hit about where I aimed but the winds they gave us were wrong. Nobody hit the bridge consequently, and post-strike photography showed there were 30 cars on the bridge at the time. #2 couldn't get his bombs off and carried them out. The flak was lighter than reputed and we only saw about 6 SAMs, which weren't too close. However, Pancho #2 was hit by a SAM on the way out and went down [Capt Robert Malcolm Elliott, 34 TFS, KIA]. We went on down to Pack I in northern Mu Gia Pass and #2 got his bombs off. The rest of us made 3 strafing passes on a building along the road." Their mission lasted for 3 hours 45 minutes.

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong further described this Valentine Day mission. "The weather cleared in Pack VIA so we launched against the Hanoi Railroad and Highway Bridge (alternately called the Canal des Rapides Bridge) which I hadn't bombed since 28 October. Bob Smith was the mission commander and I was flying #3 in the lead flight which meant that I was the deputy mission commander. We went the water route and dropped off on a Northwesterly heading towards Hanoi in unusually clear weather. As we neared the cost line of the Delta, I noted Bob's two 3,000# bombs drop and impact with violent explosion on the beach. I called out: 'Scuba lead, why don't you turn around and I'll take the force in'. There was absolutely no reason to risk oneself and an aircraft that had no bombs. His response was: 'Negative'. I should have expected as much from

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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hard-headed Bob Smith. He knew that I was perfectly capable of taking the force to the target but he wasn't about to retreat.

"So Bob led us in for a run on the bridge. He made his dive bomb run as if he had bombs to drop. Post strike photography showed that there were about 30 cars on the bridge when we arrived and the locomotive was valiantly trying to back off which apparently he was able to do. I released my bombs and joined up with Bob for our egress. Our #2 man, Bill Thomas and our #4 man, Gary Durkee were nowhere to be seen so the two of us headed to the tankers. When we coasted up to the tankers, we observed that the two of them were already there. I should mention that this was the first Pack VIA mission for both of them and that probably accounts for their actions.

"I called out: 'Hey, #2, you've still got a bomb on your right wing'. Gary Durkee called: 'And you've got one on your left wing, too'. Bill apparently didn't realize that his 3,000# bombs had not released when he hit the button. He never had dropped that size bomb before and felt the quiver in the aircraft when they were blown off the pylon station. Even with this extra load, he had out run us and Gary was so mesmerized by the 6 SA-2's that we saw and the 85-mm flak which popped around us just before roll-in that he hadn't noticed the bombs on Bill's aircraft. They were justified in having adrenaline up to their eyeballs because of the enemy defenses since Capt. Bob Elliot from our squadron was hit by a SA-2 on the way out and killed.

"When we landed Bob Smith told us what happened to him on the way in. He was flying on auto-pilot as the mission commanders always did to give some stability to the many aircraft using him for guidance when the auto-pilot 'burped' and he hurriedly grabbed the control stick. In his haste he inadvertently hit the already armed bomb release system. Explanation:>>There were a dozen things that one had to do before entering North Vietnam. Maybe some pilots used a checklist but I memorized the steps since I wanted to keep my head out of the cockpit. I made up a little jingle which contained the first letter of what needed to be done and had rehearsed it enough so that it came naturally even in times of extreme stress! Some of those steps were to dump the cabin pressure so that you would not ingest fumes in case of a hit in the compressor section. You also had to verify that you had selected the correct mil setting for the attack, selected the proper ordnance on the appropriate station, gone to 100% oxygen, etc. All of this time you had to maintain your formation position and look for MiGs and SA-2's. This was not easy and the less competent/current pilots had all they could handle! Bob had already done all of this and now was concentrating on positioning the force for the attack when the auto-pilot 'burped'.<<

"Bob was now faced with two thoughts. The first was what to do with Bill's bombs. 3,000# bombs were a precious commodity so he was loathe to just drop them safe. Secondly, he was still smarting over the inadvertent loss of his bombs. So after we all took on our post strike fuel (Bob told us to take a couple thousand pounds more than every other flight was taking on board) Bob called for a FAC in Pack I. All of the other flights proceeded down the Gulf and headed back to Thailand across South Vietnam -- except the four of us. We flew into Pack I and made contact with a FAC who said that he had spotted a building at the North end of Muy Ghia Pass where some bad guys were hanging out. It was easy to see so Bob told Bill Thomas to bomb it. Bill made his run but the bombs failed to release a second time -- an obvious material malfunction. Bob then told him to do it again but this time to hit the jettison button which caused the bombs to impact still attached to the pylon and thus not armed.

"This was done. Then Bob asked the FAC if he wanted us to strafe the building since we had 1,000 rounds of 20-mm ammo each. Of course the FAC said yes. So Bob made the first firing pass by flying below the heights of the pass to get the right attack dive angle. We all followed and made 3 passes each until we had fired all of our ammo. I'm sure it looked to a casual observer that we doing a gunnery practice on a range back in the states. In fact, Muy Ghia Pass was known to have the fiercest defenses on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Reconnaissance aircraft transited it at 600

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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knots and still were shot at by the flak sites situated on the hill sides. As far as any of us could tell, they never fired a shot at us while we made these vulnerable, multiple passes. We concluded that this was such an unusually bold effort that the North Vietnamese just knew it had to be a trick! From my standpoint, I had just hung my precious bottom out twice on one mission for just one counter. This was vintage Bob Smith! He had no fear of anything."

As "Scuba 02", Capt William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. received the Distinguished Flying Cross for Extraordinary Achievement on this mission. "... Capt Thomas was a member of the lead flight of a force of F-105 aircraft assigned the mission of destroying a key military target in the vicinity of Hanoi. Despite heavy barrages of surface-to-air missiles and antiaircraft artillery fire, Captain Thomas skillfully and at great risk made a precise bomb run on the target. ..." (Award citation under Hq 7th AF SO G-1844, 24 June 68.)

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 26 - 27 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 39 - 40.*

#### 23-Feb-68

4134

Maj Kenneth W. Mays from the 34 TFS at Korat flew his final combat mission into North Vietnam. "I finished my 100 missions on 23 Feb 1968 with a Sky Spot to a target near Yen Bai. They were mad. When we finished our drop, the sky was filled with 85. I am sure they wanted to let me know they appreciated what I had done for them over the past 7 months. I decided it was time to head home and celebrate with those who cared.

"The following day our DO, James Stewart (who I had known for many years), [Col James L. Stewart, the 388 TFW Deputy Commander for Operations] called me in and asked me to stay for a while longer and fly a few more missions as Korat was short of experience. He also stated he needed an executive officer.

"I went and talked to Bob Smith (Lt Col Robert W. Smith, the 34 TFS commander who had replaced Maj George G. Clausen on 1 December 1967] who told me to get off the base and be on my way, that I had flown my 100 missions. I immediately left for Bangkok by taxi and thanks to Don Hodge [Maj Donald W. Hodge], my roommate, the balance of my personal items were shipped home. Thanks to Bob for having the courage to put the welfare of his men first. That decision probably saved my life. Thanks, Robert W. Smith.

"What a great group of people to serve with. They gave so much to have our Washington leadership let it slip away. My thanks to all who helped me get home safe."

*Col Ken Mays, USAF (Ret), unpublished memoir, "Tour At Korat -- July 67 to Feb 68", dated 15 Dec 2003.*

#### 01-Apr-68

4104

"On 1 April 68, Maj Roger D. Ingvalson succeeded Maj James E. Daniel as 34 TFS Operations Officer. Major Daniel completed a one year SEA tour in both the F-105 and O-1E aircraft. Major Ingvalson was an assigned flight leader in the 34 TFS prior to becoming Operations officer."

During the month of April 1968, four squadron pilots completed 100 missions over North Vietnam. They were: squadron commander Lt Col Robert W. Smith, Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, Maj Donald W. Hodge, and Maj David D. Igelman.

Maj Igelman flew his 100th on 1 April 1968. He led "Bass" flight whose lineup was:

- #1 - Maj David D. Igelman
- #2 - Capt Lamont H. Pharmer
- #3 - Capt Gary G. Durkee
- #4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 26th mission into North Vietnam.

# Robert W. Smith

## F-105 History

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Their mission lasted 2 hours 55 minutes.

Igelman remained at Korat until mid-May. "After completing my 100, I was held for awhile by the Wing DO who thought we would be in jeopardy of returning if we didn't stay a full overseas tour of 9 months. ... During that period, I was sorta in limbo. I was given the task of devising a monthly 'Ops Report' for the 388th."

After Igelman left Korat, he was assigned to the Air Staff, Studies & Analyses in the Pentagon.

By the end of April, the squadron had 29 combat pilots authorized and 26 available. They were authorized 18 F-105Ds with 21 assigned and 18 available.

*388 TFW History, Apr - Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frames 1385 - 1386 & 34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & Dave Igelman, e-mail 4 Apr 10 & Joe Sechler's flight log spreadsheet.*

### 06-Apr-68

4911

"Waco" flight from the 34 TFS hit a truck park in Laos. The flight took off at 0640 and returned after flying for 3 hours. The line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #2 - Capt Anthony F. Germann
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 61-0167
- #4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 28th combat mission. He logged 3:00 hours flying time.

This was Maj Armstrong's 92nd combat mission. "I logged 2 hours of weather on this one. I was by myself in the weather from take-off to just prior to reaching the tanker. We were fragged into Pack I but were diverted by Cricket to a Nail FAC in middle Laos. We hit a suspect truck park but didn't get anything out of it. L/C Smith asked for permission into the Package but it was denied. We started to head home with a non-counter when I suggested we contact 'Hillsboro' for clearance into the DMZ so I switched over to their frequency and they approved the request so we turned around and went in for a weather recce. Then it was back through the weather to here where it was raining."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 35.*

### 08-Apr-68

755

"Thunderchief pilots from the 355 TFW struck a petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL) storage area 12 miles north-northeast of Mu Gia Pass"

"Using 750-pound bombs, 388 TFW pilots destroyed the eastern approach to a bridge 38 miles southeast of the coastal city of Dong Hoi." The pilots were in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS. They took off from Korat at 1240 and flew for 2 hours 50 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Maj Donald W. Hodge
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 60-0488
- #3 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #4 - Lt Col Robert A. "Red" Evans, 44 TFS Commander?

This was Maj Armstrong's 94th combat mission. "We were fragged to hit a bridge just north of the DMZ in Pack I. Surprisingly enough they cleared us in to hit it. We couldn't find the bridge we were supposed to hit so we hit a causeway across a river in the same location. Don Hodge hit long, I hit on the approach, and Bob Smith hit it dead center. They shot some 85-mm flak at us on the way up and some 37-mm after we dropped. It was the first time I had seen flak in Pack I. I also had a

# Robert W. Smith

## F-105 History

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SAM launch light on for 10 seconds."

*Takhli Times, Friday, April 19, 1968 & Sawadee Flyer, Saturday, April 20 1968 & Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 36.*

### 10-Apr-68

4914

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS hit a road in South Vietnam and some long boats in North Vietnam. The flight took off at 0730 and returned after flying for 2 hours 30 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS commander
- #2 - Olin K. Everett
- #3 - Maj Roger Dean Ingvalson (POW, 28 May 68, in F-105D 61-0194)
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 61-0194

This was Maj Armstrong's 96th combat mission. "We hit a road segment in South Vietnam very close to the position we bombed yesterday. This time our hits were right on the road. Afterwards, we went up north of the DMZ and found some long boats underway south of Dong Hoi. Rog Ingvalson and myself made one strafing pass apiece on one each."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 36 - 37.*

### 12-Apr-68

4916

"Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS hit a road in southern Laos. The flight took off at 0910 and returned after flying for 2 hours 55 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0436
- #3 - Col Paul P. Douglas, Jr., 388 TFW Commander
- #4 - Maj Donald W. Hodge

This was Maj Armstrong's 98th combat mission. "We bombed a road down in southern Laos southeast of Sarravane. The weather was clear but hazy. There was quite a crosswind and #1 and myself put our bombs a little to the left of the road. Don Hodge picked up the wind from our bombs and put his right on the road. Col Douglas missed by 100 yards or more. They fired about 20 rounds of 37-mm flak at us but not too close. 'Hillsboro' invited us to go recce the Pack. Smith and I let down through the clouds and got underneath at 1,000' and ran up and down the coast. The visibility was really good underneath but we couldn't see anything moving."

In commenting on his last 10 missions in his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong further described this mission. "On one of these flights, Bob was leading and we were cleared into Pack I for a reconnaissance. We crossed into Pack I at about 18,000 feet which was enough to get a counter. But not enough for Bob. He told the other two to hold at that altitude and signaled for me to close in on his wing. We descended through the clouds towards the Gulf of Tonkin using our radar to denote the water. We broke out under the clouds over the Gulf at about 800 feet. We then spread out and turned around towards Pack I. We ran down Route #1 at high speed. They were shooting at us and we were so low and fast that there was no way we could attack any worthwhile target. After a few minutes I joined up on his wing again and we climbed out through the clouds to rejoin the other two guys and go back to Korat. I guess the extra excitement was okay!"

Under Hillsboro control, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Waco 3" to attack a road segment in Steel Tiger. "100%. Three road cuts." He then flew armed recce in RP-1. "No significant sightings." It was his 59th combat mission.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 37 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 47 & Rufus Dye Mission History log*

# Robert W. Smith

## F-105 History

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**13-Apr-68**

4917

"Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS hit a road segment in RP-1 using Sky Spot radar. The flight took off at 1245 and returned after flying for 2 hours 15 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 59-1760
- #2 - Maj Donald W. Hodge
- #3 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #4 - Maj Seymour R. Bass (died in mid-air with flight lead, 14 May 68)

This was Maj Armstrong's 99th combat mission. "We were fragged in on a target in Pack I. It was a road segment on Rt 1A just south of Dong Hoi. The weather was completely undercast so they set us up for a radar drop on our target. We had so much fuel that we didn't even have to post-strike refuel on the way back. A real effortless mission."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 37 - 38.*

**14-Apr-68**

189

The 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand, passed the 100,000 combat flying hour mark. This represents "... the flying equivalent of 11 years and five months, in just over two years of combat operations in SEA." The wing started flying F-105 combat missions on 8 April 1966.

"Honors to the milestone flight went to the wing's 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron. The flight [call sign "Gator"] was led by 388th TFW Commander Col. Paul P. Douglas Jr., who is assigned to the 34th TFS for flying duties, Squadron Commander Lt. Col. Robert W. Smith, 39, Albuquerque, N.M., and Maj. Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 33, Columbia, Tenn. and Donald W. Hodge, 37, Panama City, Fla." On this flight, Lt Col Smith, Maj Armstrong, and Maj Hodge each achieved their 100th mission over North Vietnam.

The 34 TFS launched "Gator" flight at 15:10. The mission lasted 3 hours. The line up was:

- #1 - Col Paul P. Douglas, Jr., 388 TFW Commander
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 60-0435
- #3 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #4 - Maj Donald W. Hodge

Maj Armstrong recorded the events in his combat log. "This was a big occasion being the 100th mission for Bob Smith, Don Hodge, and myself and the celebration of the 100,000th combat hour for the wing. Our target was down in Laos just outside Khe Sahn. The 3 of us put our bombs right on the FAC's mark. Col Douglas didn't have a sight so consequently his bombs were way off. We had already coordinated with 7th AF to assume that our flight would be cleared into Pack I. So we buzzed through the Pack at altitude over the clouds and came back to the field for a diamond fly-by and VFR landing pattern. Unfortunately, Col Douglas taxied off the taxiway coming in and had to shut his aircraft down on the spot. It's beautiful to be finished!" (Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 38)

He also described this mission in his memoir. "Bob Smith, Don Hodge and I were slated to fly our 100th missions the same day. We had arrived on the same day so it was appropriate to end it the same way, same day. Normally, the person finishing would lead the flight so how would we work this out? Col. Douglas had already indicated that our last mission would represent the 100,000 combat hour for the wing and to commemorate this, he would lead the flight. Our target was in Laos just outside Khe Sahn. The weather was hazy and he couldn't find the target. My tape recorder told the story. The three of us were directing the flight!

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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"Col. Douglas claimed that he didn't have a sight but his bombs were well off the target so he might have been correct. He was so non-proficient in the F-105 that it could have just been a goof on his part. Because of the celebration planned upon our return, it had already been coordinated with 7th Air Force in Saigon for us to be cleared into Pack I afterwards. So we got our 100th counter effortlessly and formed up on Col. Douglas to head back to the field. Unfortunately, he couldn't find the field in the haze and we were no help because we were in tight formation.

"He asked the tower to get him a radar approach to initial. The tower replied that there was another flight on radar final. Did he want them to break out? Col. Douglas asked them to do just that and we flew down initial with this help and made the pitch-out for landing. We had briefed that we would taxi in formation back to the flight line for the celebration. I was #2 and I quickly performed my after landing checks from memory. I was taxiing on Col. Douglas and observed that he had to use his checklist to do his checks. As he took his eye off the taxi way, his left wheel rolled off into the soft mud. He was obviously stuck! We continued on around him and headed for the planned celebration. Col. Douglas joined us later from the back of a pickup truck.

"We each got the usual treatment: champagne from a hollowed-out pineapple, a Thai ornament around the neck and a squirt down from a fire truck. Then we mounted the Snoopy trailers for the parade to the club. They tossed us into the swimming pool and we managed to take a few squadron mates with us. Dripping wet, we went into the bar and each rung the bell signifying that the drinks were on us. Then we had a formal cutting of the cake to commemorate the 100,000th combat hour of the wing. Col. Douglas and the three of us did the honors. We celebrated into the wee hours!"

"... My 100th mission was on Easter Sunday, 1968. ... Normally, Bob, Don and I would be heading home after completing our 100th mission. However, in typical bureaucratic fashion, the Pentagon decided that pilots were completing their 100 missions over North Vietnam (otherwise, the tour length was one year) tours too quickly. So we had to hang around for awhile. I stayed three weeks but Bob stayed even longer. I was not required to fly any more missions and I didn't. It would have taken missions away from my comrades who were trying to finish in this now relatively benign environment." (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 47 - 48.)

Maj Armstrong flew 283 combat hours during his tour at Korat. He arrived home on 8 May 1968 and was assigned to Edwards AFB where he became deputy commandant at the Aerospace Research Pilot School. In subsequent assignments he was base commander at Randolph Air Force Base, commander of the 80th Flying Training Wing at Sheppard AFB, Assistant Deputy for Operations of Air Training Command, DCS for R&D at Hq USAF, commander of the Military Training Center at Lackland AFB, the senior defense representative in Saudi Arabia, Vice Commander of MAC, and Vice Commander of Air Force Systems Command. He was promoted to Lt General on 28 August 1985 and retired on 1 April 1990. (USAF Biography)

After retirement, he became head of NASA's Aeronautics and Space Transportation Technology Enterprise with overall responsibility for each of NASA's four aeronautical research centers.

*388 TFW History, Apr - Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frame 0685 & Korat's Sawadee Flyer, Apr 20, 1968, Pg 1.*

#### 15-May-68

2101

Lt Col Robert J. Klingensmith, Jr. replaced Lt Col Robert W. Smith as commander of the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

Lt Col Smith completed his F-105 combat tour and was assigned to the Pentagon. "Lt Col Klingensmith, prior to receiving F-105 training at McConnell AFB, Kansas, was assigned to ADC

# Robert W. Smith

## F-105 History

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Headquarters, Chief of Interceptor Branch, Directorate of Aerospace Tactics and Training,  
Colorado Springs, Colorado."

*E-mail, 26 Feb 2002, from Lt Col Donald T. Bolling, 34 FS Commander, Hill AFB & 388 TFW history, Apr - Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frames 0874 and 1392.*

**19-Aug-10**

6649

Hi Howard,

The wife of Bob Smith, former 34th TFS Squadron Commander, called me this morning and told me that Bob had passed away on the 19th. He had a stroke about 6 years ago and had made a remarkable recovery but about 6 months ago he started down hill and his wife, Martha, said she was unable to take care of him and put him in a very nice nursing home. All of his family was home when he died. He didn't want any kind of service and wanted to be cremated.

I notified Ken Mays and Sam Armstrong. Ken will put the word out when he gets back from a trip on Tuesday. Sam said he will notify the River Rats and if anyone is interested, he will send excerpts from his book which contain some of the wild/heroic things Bob did.

I'm sure you are on Ken's email list but didn't want you to miss the info in case you weren't.

Take care.

Monty

Date: Mon, 13 Sep 2010 13:23:46 -0400  
From: Joe Richardson <joerr@EOS.NET>  
Subject: Bob Smith (RIP)

On August 25, 2010 SArmstr251@aol.com sent:

[Editor's Note: I apologize for the extra RATNET DIGEST, but I left this out two weeks in a row and figured if I waited until next weekend I'd do it again.]

Lurch,

I am attaching an obit for Bob Smith. I didn't say in the write up that he got a "7" OER after being a Thud squadron commander for six months and retired as a Lt. Col. Bob was a renegade as well as being a superb pilot. He refused to wear a flying suit and flew his 100 plus missions in fatigues. He also refused to wear sun glasses, gloves and a g-suit. He and I went through McConnell together and flew our 100 mission flights together on Easter Sunday 1968.

Sam Armstrong

===== OBIT =====

It is with regret that I post the death of Lt. Col. Robert W. Smith, USAF retired who passed away on 19 August after a six month debilitating illness. He requested that he be cremated and his ashes scattered on his property. There was to be no memorial service by his instructions. Bob was the commander of the 34th TFS at Korat from 1 December 1967 to 15 May 1968. He was an F-86 pilot in the Korean War and a test pilot at Edwards prior to Korat. His exploits at Edwards are chronicled on: [www.kalimera.org/nf104/ab/ch\\_2/iihtml](http://www.kalimera.org/nf104/ab/ch_2/iihtml) and [www.nf104com/pilots/smith.html](http://www.nf104com/pilots/smith.html). He was the acceptance pilot for the nF104 which Lockheed modified with a rocket in the tail and other features to allow it to be zoomed to over 120,000 feet. Chuck Yeager crashed one of the three modified birds in December 1963 while attempting to set an altitude record. For Bob's record flying the F-105 at Korat, he earned the Air Force Cross among other awards. You may pull up the details of Bob's Korat service collected by Howard Plunkett and hosted on

## Robert W. Smith

### F-105 History

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<http://www.burrusspta.org/Smith105History.pdf>

Bob Smith was born on December 11, 1928, in Washington, D.C. He enlisted in the Aviation Cadet Program of the U.S. Air Force on June 20, 1949, and was commissioned a 2nd Lt and awarded his pilot wings at Williams AFB, Arizona, on June 23, 1950. Lt Smith flew F-86 Sabres with the 27th Fighter Squadron of the 1st Fighter Wing at Griffiss AFB, New York, from July 1950 to June 1951, followed by service with the 335th Fighter Interceptor Squadron of the 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing at Kimpo AB, South Korea, from August 1951 to April 1952. During this period, Lt Smith was credited with destroying 2 enemy aircraft in aerial combat plus 1 probable and 3 damaged. After returning to the U.S., Lt Smith served with the 93rd Air Defense Squadron at Albuquerque Municipal Airport, New Mexico, from April 1952 to August 1953, and then completed an Air Force Institute of Technology assignment to complete his bachelor's degree in Aeronautical Engineering in 1955. Capt Smith next completed Test Pilot School and then served as a flight test officer with Air Proving Ground Command at Edwards AFB, California, and Eglin AFB, Florida, from January 1956 to January 1960, followed by service as a project officer on the Titan II ballistic missile section at Vandenberg AFB, California, from January 1960 to June 1962. He attended the Aerospace Research Pilot Course at Edwards AFB from June 1962 to January 1963, and then served as a test pilot on the NF-104 project at Edwards AFB from January 1963 to September 1964. His next assignment was on the staff of Headquarters Air Force Systems Command at Andrews AFB, Maryland, from September 1964 to March 1967, followed by F-105 Thunderchief Combat Crew Training from March to October 1967. Col Smith then deployed to Southeast Asia where he flew combat as commander of the 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Korat Royal Thai AFB, Thailand, from October 1967 to June 1968. His final assignment was as an F-111 Project Officer with Headquarters U.S. Air Force in the Pentagon from June 1968 until his retirement from the Air Force on August 1, 1969. Bob Smith died on August 19, 2010. (<http://www.veterantributes.org/TributeDetail.asp?ID=775>)

*Monty Pharmed, e-mail 22 Aug 2010 & RAT NET Digest, 12 Sep 2010 to 13 Sep 2010 (#2010-36).*