

Mervin M. Taylor

F-105 History

28-Jan-67

2542

Maj. Marlin R. Blake from the 13 TFS, 388 TFW, Korat, RTAFB, Thailand, flew his 41st combat mission. Four F-105Ds carrying six 750-pound bombs.

"Torpedo" flight. Takeoff at 1350. TOT 1500.
Torpedo 1 - Maj Marlin R. Blake flying 59-1745
Torpedo 2 - Capt David H. Coats flying 62-4269
Torpedo 3 - Lt Col Gerald F. "Jerry" Fitzgerald flying 61-0123
Torpedo 4 - Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor flying 60-0516
Spare - Capt Edgar W. "Ed" Michie in 60-0425.

"Refueled. Went to Route 7 in RP-3. FAC (Firefly 15) had lots of small river barges to hit. Destroyed estimated five and many damaged by bombs and 20 mm. Good mission."

100 Mission Log of Maj. Marlin R. Blake

02-Feb-67

2547

Maj. Marlin R. Blake from the 13 TFS, 388 TFW, Korat, RTAFB, Thailand, flew a mission into the Steel Tiger area of Laos. Two F-105Ds.

"Mumbles" flight. Takeoff at 1530. 1610 TOT.
Mumbles 1 - Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor flying 61-0213
Mumbles 2 - Capt Donald M. Majors flying 61-0194
Spare - Maj Marlin R. Blake in 60-0530

Spare took the place of 1 or 2. "No refuel. Combat Proof in Steel Tiger area. Candy mission." Joined "Bobcat Lead" at 1555 at 18,000 feet, 470 knots TAS, and heading of 030 degrees at coordinates 16-40N and 105-20E. Struck target at coordinates 17-31N and 105-44E.

100 Mission Log of Maj. Marlin R. Blake

20-Feb-67

1156

"During a ten hour period, Air Force F-105s and F-4Cs bombed and strafed more than 80 trucks discovered travelling along Route 15, about 15 - 25 miles north of Mu Gia Pass. Forty-two of the enemy cargo vehicles were destroyed and 20 others were damaged."

In this morning mission, a flight of four F-105s from the 354 TFS, 355 TFW, bombed and strafed the trucks in RP-1, North Vietnam. Flight lead was Maj Vernon Frye with Maj Kenneth H. Bell, on his 50th mission, flying as number two. Maj Ted Tolman was element lead. "Minutes after we arrived over Route Pack One, the solid layer of clouds that greeted us began to clear very quickly. In less than five minutes, we were able to see the entire valley south of Dong Hoi. The road that traversed the valley was lined with vehicles, the first concentration of trucks I had seen in months of tiring road reconnaissance.

"For once, the weather had worked to our advantage. ... We reported the action, asked for additional fighters, and went to work attacking the stalled convoy. Vern Frye, the flight leader split us into elements to bomb the road north and south of the convoy to seal off their escape routes. Ted Tolman took his element to the left to make a northern cut while Vern and I pulled up to hit a bridge to the south. ... Vern dropped the bridge, but my bombs hit long in a big clump of trees

"Among the four of us we had 4,000 rounds of 20-mm ammunition to expend on the trucks, and we made the most of it. ... For a few moments, we threw caution to the wind and enjoyed multiple, low-level passes on the hapless convoy. We made strafing passes until our ammunition was

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expended. When we finally headed home, a dozen trucks were destroyed and more were burning, but over half of the vehicles were left untouched. As we departed, several more flights checked in on the radio asking for clearance and directions to the convoy."

Another pilot attacking the truck convoy was Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor, a flight lead from the 34 TFS at Korat. He bombed and strafed the trucks and acted as a FAC for multiple flights of fighters from the Air Force, Navy and Marines. He refueled four times on his mission that lasted 6.15 hours. The strikes destroyed an estimated 100 vehicles. Lt Col Taylor was awarded the First Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross. He had received his first DFC as an F-80C pilot in May 1951 during the Korean war.

Maj Homer T. Terry was another 34 TFS pilot who attacked the trucks in Mu Gia Pass. "Mu Gia Pass is a very narrow ravine and was a choke point along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Clouds covered the area most of the time and oft times bombs were dropped into the cloud coverage via 'Sky Spot'. The pass was so cratered from bombs that it looked like the moon.

"On this particular day, we had been targeted against some suspected underground fuel storage tanks near Phuc Yen Airbase. Each of us in my flight were loaded with two 3,000 lb bombs. This was a morning flight and on the way to the tanker we received a no-go on the primary target; so we were cleared to road recce. We dropped off the tanker and switched over to tactical frequency and checked in. I got an immediate call from the Wild Weasel flight and was instructed to head for Mu Gia Pass. They had gone in about ten minutes before we left the tanker and were flying over the pass when the shrouding clouds seemed to evaporate to reveal a convoy of trucks wending their way through the gorge. They dropped all the hardware they had, emptied their guns and started some fires.

"I led my flight over the pass and assessed the situation. I directed #3 & 4 to go to the south of the convoy and place their bombs into the mountain side above the convoy. I had #2 go to the north with me and do the same. We caused land slides that closed the road and trapped the convoy. We then proceeded to fire all our Gatling gun ammo. We carried one heat seeker air-to-air missile, so I fired it at the conflagration below. I don't know if it guided, but it was fun to fire the only one of those I ever fired. It was the only flight I made that I returned totally devoid of ammo. It was pure happenstance that my flight was carrying the ideal weapons for the situation we encountered that day.

"The following article appeared in the Stars & Stripes the next day:

'Saigon- An unexpected break of good weather in the southern panhandle of North Vietnam brought a swarm of Air Force, Marine and Navy planes Monday on large truck convoys sitting in Mu Gia Pass. A military spokesman said 70 of the 127 trucks sighted were destroyed by the jet fighter-bombers. Another 31 were damaged. ... Air Force crews piloting F-105s started the assault, which lasted some ten hours. An Air Force F-105 pilot said his flights' 3,000 pound bombs cut the road and started a landslide.' " (Homer Terry, "Turkey Shoot In the Mu Gia Pass", via e-mail, 27 Mar 2010.)

Corona Harvest Chronology of Significant Airpower Events in Southeast Asia, 1954 - 1967, pg 131 & "100 Missions North", pgs 183 - 184 & BG Mervin Taylor, letter to Ron Thurlow, 30 May 2000.

20-Apr-67

1317

Twelve planes struck the Kep railroad yard (BE 616-01371) (ART 1270) at 21-24-48N and 106-17-36E on the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) 39 miles northeast of Hanoi on 20 April and again by 4 sorties on 21 April. Seventy-one 750-pound bombs were dropped on the yard. "Pilots reported three trains in the yard suffered heavy damage with an unknown number of rolling stock destroyed

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and numerous rail interdictions." (PACAF Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for the period 3 - 23 Apr 1967.)

In today's strike, F-105 pilots from the 388 TFW "... caught three freight trains in the ... yards ... when they made their first pass over the large complex at 4:25 p.m. By the time the flights of F-105s flew from the target six minutes later, many rail cuts had been made in the fire-swept area."

"Pilots observed the fireballs and flames leaping to 300 feet, with a dense black and brown smoke cloud at 2,000 feet that was rising even higher as they departed the area. Heavy enemy ... AAA fire was directed at the flight throughout the runs and numerous separate sightings of SAMs were reported by the flight."

Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor from the 34 TFS was one of the pilots in a flak suppression flight. He flew for 3 hours 35 minutes and was awarded the Third Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross.

1Lt Karl W. Richter from the 421 TFS led another flak suppression flight. "... On April 20, 1967, Richter led a defense-suppression flight of F-105s through weather that obscured navigation references and into intense enemy fire. His flight destroyed or pinned down the enemy anti-aircraft and SAM crews, enabling the strike force to eliminate an important railroad target. Richter, who had already received the Silver Star, was awarded the Air Force Cross for his skill and heroism on this day." The citation for his Air Force Cross said, "... The target, a very important railroad facility, was defended by several hundred anti-aircraft artillery emplacements and SA-2 missiles. Lieutenant Richter's mission was to destroy or limit fire from these defenses immediately before a strike on this facility by fighter bombers. Arriving over the approach to his target, he found clouds obscuring navigational references and increasing the danger from unobserved SAM launches. Despite weather conditions, Lieutenant Richter, with great professional skill and undaunted determination, led his flight through a barrage of missiles to the target. Braving the heavy concentrated fire of the anti-aircraft artillery, he positioned his flight and attacked the defenses, causing heavy damage. As a result of his efforts, the fighter bombers of the main strike force encountered only limited defensive fire and destroyed this vital railroad facility ...".

"Pilots reported three trains in the yard suffered heavy damage with an unknown number of rolling stock destroyed and numerous rail interdictions." (Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, 17 November 1967, pg 11.)

388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463, frames 1470 and 1755 & BG Mervin Taylor, letter to Ron Thurlow, 30 May 2000 & Clay Marson, biographical researcher - AFC, posting on the virtual wall web site, 21 Feb 99

24-Apr-67

1465

"Air Force F-105 pilots assigned to the 469 TFS at Korat cratered a road segment in two places, 30 miles west-northwest of Dong Hoi. Their bombs also caused a landslide that covered 150 feet of road, making it unuseable."

"Another flight of Thunderchiefs in the area cut a road in four places, 31 miles west-northwest of Dong Hoi."

"Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor, 42, of Falmouth, Mass, commenting on his strike against the Lang Lau railroad bridge, 37 miles north of Hanoi, said, 'There was a lot of smoke and dirt in the air from bomb drops and I couldn't actually see if the bridge was destroyed, but when I rolled in on it, that bridge was right in my sights and if I missed it, I would be very, very surprised.' Col Taylor is a Korat-based F-105 pilot from the 34 TFS."

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388 TFW History, Jan - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO583, frame 1473.

13-May-67

938

In the afternoon, with clearer weather over North Vietnam, the 388 TFW struck the Vinh Yen Army Barracks (North) (JCS 34) in RP-6A at coordinates 21-19-25N and 105-36-21E. The barracks had three areas targeted by the F-105s. Area 1 was the barracks buildings. Area 2, south of the barracks, was being used for storage and support, while Area 4 was another barracks and support area. The attack destroyed or damaged 14 buildings. (Project CHECO Report, Rolling Thunder, 17 Nov 1967, pg 19.)

The Alpha force consisted of three strike flights (with call signs "Muskrat", "Ragtop", and "Tamale") and a flak suppression flight (with call sign "Kimono"). Each of these four flights had four F-105Ds. The mission was supported by an Iron Hand Wild Weasel flight (using call sign "Lincoln") consisting of two F-105Fs and two F-105Ds.

As the first to attack at 3:20 PM, pilots of "Muskrat" flight dropped twenty-four 750-pound bombs and six 500-pound bombs on Area 1. They encountered heavy but inaccurate white bursts of 37/57-mm AAA two miles from them and saw two SAMs explode without endangering the flight. However, as described in the day's intelligence report, they were menaced by five MiGs.

"As Muskrat flight pulled off (the target) in a defensive fingertip formation, they jinked slightly right and then hard left In the hard left break, two silver MiG-17s ... in trail, made a closing left turn on the flight and passed immediately in front of them. Proximity was so close that Muskrat 2 saw the spoilers on one MiG. Muskrat flight turned hard left into the MiGs to close, lead riveted his attention to line up on the MiGs for firing. Almost simultaneously three silver MiG-17s in an echelon with Muskrat 2 and 3 slightly behind Muskrat 1, ... made a quartering stern attack on Muskrat lead from 4 o'clock high. The first MiG-17 commenced firing across lead's left wing high. Muskrat 2 said, 'Muskrat Lead break hard right'. Lead broke immediately and the rest of the flight followed. The right break caused the MiGs to overshoot. They went over the flight to the south and were not seen again. The first two MiGs - the 'bait', had initiated a hard climb once they had brought the F-105s around behind them. ... No damage incurred or inflicted."

Three minutes after "Muskrat" flight hit Area 1, pilots of "Ragtop" flight dropped twenty-four 750-pound bombs on Area 2. The flight encountered seven more MiGs.

"Lead observed a silver MiG-17 at 5 o'clock level approximately 1500 - 2000 feet behind him during pullout from target. Lead broke right and Ragtop 4 went after the MiG. MiG was firing at lead. Ragtop 4 fired on MiG but no hits observed. MiG broke off to right. Ragtop 4 then started after another MiG-17 that was in a descending left turn. (This) MiG went into steep dive at 4 - 5000 feet and Ragtop 4 broke off. Ragtop 2 (in F-105D 60-0494) observed a silver MiG-17 with a red star at 5000 feet during target pullout. (The) MiG was at 5 o'clock level and approximately 2000 feet from Ragtop 2. Ragtop 2 maneuvered into position and fired 170 rounds at the MiG. No hits were observed. (The) MiG then broke down and left. Ragtop 3 (Maj. Ralph L. Kuster from the 469 TFS in F-105D 61-0069) observed three MiG-17s at 9 o'clock high. All three MiGs overshoot Ragtop 3. These MiGs were observed chasing an aircraft that had bottomed out after the strike. Two MiGs were following Ragtop flight down the slide. Pilot comments: MiGs appeared to be aware of target and were waiting for strike force. Well coordinated MiG attacks. One pilot reported this to be the second time he has observed MiGs orbiting a target area."

The mission against the Vinh Yen target was the 56th combat mission to North Vietnam for Capt Jack A. Phillips from the 34 TFS. "Pack 6; Vinh Yen Army barracks and POL storage, 10 miles NW of Hanoi (JCS 34.00); flight lead. ... got jumped by MiGs but couldn't get a good shot although I

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hosed off a few rounds at a 17. Mo Seaver ... was leading a flight behind me and shot one down. Lots of flak again, but we didn't lose any." Phillips was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry. "...Captain Phillips led a flight of F-105s on a strike against a vital army barracks and training area. Despite numerous hostile aircraft, intense ground fire and multiple surface to air missiles, Captain Phillips calmly directed his flight to a successful attack on the target. ..." (Jack Phillips Mission Summary, e-mail 18 & 21 Mar 11.)

Pilots of "Tamale" flight dropped twenty-four 750-pound bombs on Area 4 and saw three or four strings of bombs hitting directly on the target. The flight carried a total of six QRC-160 ECM pods to jam AAA radar. As they rolled in, Tamale 4 saw black bursts of inaccurate 85-mm AAA. A SAM, launched from the Phuc Yen area, exploded about 30 miles ahead of the flight.

Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor from the 34 TFS was one of the pilots on this mission and was probably in this flight. His bombs scored a direct hit. His mission lasted 3 hours 55 minutes and he was awarded the Second Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross. (BG Mervin Taylor, letter to Ron Thurlow, 30 May 2000.)

Tamale flight also encountered a MiG. "Just as Tamale Lead (Maj. Maurice E. Seaver from the 44 TFS in F-105D 60-0497) dropped his ordnance on (the target), he observed a camouflaged MiG-17 with a red star pass in front of him. Tamale Lead pulled off the target on a heading of 282 degrees, at about 6 - 7 thousand feet, speed 550 knots, and started to follow the MiG which was turning left. The MiG then turned to the right with Tamale Lead in trail. Tamale Lead got a good long burst of 20-mm cannon into the MiG and shortly thereafter a large ball of flame erupted from the right wing of the MiG near the fuselage. The MiG then broke down and to the right sharply. Tamale Lead couldn't follow so he turned left and climbed to break off the action. Meanwhile, Tamale two (in F-105D 60-0421) coming off the target observed an aircraft on fire. He thought that Tamale Lead had been hit and was on fire. While seeing this, he was turning right as a preplanned post-target jink maneuver and then turned back to the left. As he did so, Tamale Lead came up in front of him. They joined and exited together."

Major Seaver was initially credited with destroying this MiG-17. However, on 5 December 1967, the 7 AF Enemy Aircraft Claims Evaluation Board, withdrew the credit along with the credit they initially approved for three other MiG-kill claims by F-105 pilots. Eventually, three of the four pilots received credit for their claims.

Supporting the three strike flights with flak suppression, the four pilots of "Kimono" flight dropped 16 CBU-24s on a target one mile south of Area 1. Just prior to roll-in, a SAM burst with an orange fireball at 2 o'clock about 300 feet from Kimono 4 but did not disturb the flight's bomb run. This flight encountered several more MiGs.

"Immediately after pull off from the target at an altitude of 6,000 feet, ... a silver MiG-17 pulling several Gs passed between Kimono 1 and 2. (Maj. Harry Pawlik from the 34 TFS was "Kimono 2" in F-105D 58-1169.) As the MiG-17 passed in front of him, Kimono 2, turned to pursue it. As Kimono 2 could see the orange star on the MiG-17, he fired 440 rounds of 20 mm at the MiG-17. It is believed some of these rounds struck the MiG-17. However, no smoke or flame was observed coming from the MiG-17. Gun camera film should present an accurate evaluation of this encounter."

The gun camera film did not confirm the MiG was destroyed and Major Pawlik was not credited with shooting down this MiG-17.

The Wild Weasel "Lincoln" flight, began trolling for SAM radar signals about 10 minutes prior to the strike force reaching the barracks target. (Lincoln 1 was F-105F 63-8302, flying its second sortie of

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the day.) As they approached the target, a SAM passed 500 to 1,000 feet over the flight but did not detonate. The flight detected four Fansong radar signals and fired two AGM-45 Shrike missiles but the signals did not stop. Two minutes later the flight dropped twelve 500-pound bombs and four CBU-24s on buildings and a parking area with three or four vehicles. There was no noticeable damage to the vehicles, but the bombs did result in a large fire from a building complex with black smoke rising to 10,000 feet. The Fansong signal went off the air 15 to 20 seconds after the flight dropped the CBU-24s. Before heading home, Lincoln flight remained in the area for ten minutes after the strike flights dropped their bombs on the target.

388 TFW JOPREP/OPREP messages, 13 May 1967 & National Archives Gun and Strike Camera Film List, Control Number NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-41720B & Fairchild Hiller memo, 6 Feb 68, quoting 7 AF letter in 388 TFW history, Jul - Dec 67 frame 1876.

12-Jul-67

3231

Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, at Korat flew F-105D 61-0132 against a target at coordinates 21-01-44N and 105-30-36E. The day's missions were designated RT56A-070.

The target was the Hoa Lac airfield 20 nautical miles west of Hanoi. The PACAF briefing to CINCPAC for the period described the results of the strike. "This photo obtained by a strike aircraft shows bombs impacting along the runway, in the administration area and adjacent to the dispersed revetments. The enlarged photograph on your left reveals bomb impacts covering the administration area. The strike photo on your right shows additional bomb impacts on the main runway. Blue Tree coverage of the target was also obtained on the 12th subsequent to the strike. Mosaic coverage of the airfield shows the location of dummy MiGs and the two previously identified damaged MiGs. This enlargement of the administrative/support area shows 15 buildings destroyed or damaged. An enlarged view of the runway reveals that it is unserviceable due to several bomb craters. Photography dated 19 July showed the runway repaired and serviceable."

National Archives Gun and Strike Camera Film Records, Archive Control No. NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649 & PACAF Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 8 - 23 Jul 67.

18-Jul-67

2408

The Kep railroad yards, (BE 616-01371, BE 616-01931, and BE 616-01932) on the Northeast rail line (RR 2) in RP-5, North Vietnam, struck yesterday on 17 July, was attacked again on 18 July. Thirty-one sorties expended a total of 143 M-117s, 5 M-117s with time-delay fuzes, and 4 MK-82s against this complex. A total of 95 pieces of rolling stock were sighted during these strikes with an unknown number destroyed or damaged. "Strike photo(s) showed bomb impacts and ... 35 pieces of rolling stock and 2 locomotives, all of which have been damaged or destroyed by repeated strikes on this facility."

Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, at Korat, flew on this strike mission against the Kep Railroad Yard for which he was awarded the Fourth Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross. He destroyed a large gun emplacement during this mission. He flew for 3 hours 55 minutes.

Pilots from the 469 TFS also flew on the Kep strikes, one of whom was Maj Aquilla F. Britt who was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (2 OLC) for his extraordinary achievement. "... Major Britt was a member of a flight assigned to strike the Kep Railroad Yard located adjacent to the vital and heavily defended Kep Airfield. Despite intense antiaircraft fire, the flight destroyed the trains in an extremely accurate attack which resulted in several secondary explosions. ..." (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross (Second Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

Capt George H. Teas was another 469th pilot awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (2 OLC) for

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extraordinary achievement. His citation was identical to Maj Britt's.

Capt Winfield Scott Harpe from the 469 TFS was awarded the Silver Star (1OLC) for supporting the strike on Kep railroad yard. "The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 8, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting a Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of a Second Award of the Silver Star to Captain Winfield Scott Harpe (AFSN: FR-62522), United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force while serving with the 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron, in action over North Vietnam, on 18 July 1967. On that date, Captain Harpe led a flight of four F-105 Thunderchiefs on an attack against the rail yard supporting the Kep Airfield north of Hanoi. Instead of bombing the already heavily damaged rail yard, Captain Harpe led his flight down the tracks and deeper into the blistering anti-aircraft defenses that had already hit four aircraft in the force. Through an almost overwhelming hail of bursting flak and flying projectiles he dropped his bombs and destroyed two trains loaded with supplies. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Captain Harpe has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force. (General Orders: Headquarters, 7th Air Force, Special Order G-1459 (September 20, 1967) (<http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=24369>))

PACAF Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 8 - 23 Jul 67 & BG Mervin Taylor, letter to Ron Thurlow, 30 May 2000 & George Teas citation awarded under 7 AF SO G1843, 27 Oct 67.

02-Aug-67

3335

Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor from the 34 TFS was mission commander against the steel mill complex NE of Hanoi. (Probably the Thai Nguyen Iron & Steel Complex, (JCS 76.00)). He flew for 2.8 hours and was awarded the Silver Star under Special Order 1581, Hq 7 AF, 4 Oct 67. "Led force of 20 F-105s. ... Opposition - MiGs, Missiles, AAA fire. Bombs center target."

Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe, also from the 34 TFS, flew his 32nd combat mission today for 3.0 hours.

Capt Jack A. Phillips, 34 TFS, flew his 100th combat mission into NVN. He flew his assigned F-105D 59-1760 named "Warlord II". "Lower Pack; tour complete!" Including his "non-counters" to Laos, he had flown a total of 120 combat missions, 41 against targets in Route Pack 6 around Hanoi.

BG Mervin Taylor, letter 30 May 2000 to Ron Thurlow & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5 & Jack Phillips Mission Summary via e-mail 18 Mar 11.

12-Aug-67

1376

One day after their attacks on the Paul Doumer bridge over the Red River in Hanoi, both the 355 TFW and the 388 TFW struck the railroad and highway bridge over the Canal des Rapides (JCS 13), five miles northeast of Hanoi. This bridge on the Northeast rail line (RR 2), first struck by F-105s on 26 April 1967, carried the only rail line heading northeast from Hanoi as well as highway Route 1A. The bypass rail bridge was also hit.

"The center span of the bridge swings open to allow ship passage on the canal that runs parallel to the Red River. It is the only railroad line extending north from Hanoi and is also the highway bridge for Route 1A."

"Bombs dropped by Air Force tactical fighter-bombers yesterday (August 12) damaged a Hanoi railroad and highway bridge that crossed the Canal des Rapides, 8.5 KM (5 miles) northeast of the heart of the city."

"Morning and afternoon strikes were carried out against the five-span, 738 by 20-foot steel and concrete structure. Pilots flying F-4 Phantoms from the 8 TFW and F-105 Thunderchiefs from the

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355 and 388 TFWs reported seeing 750 and 3,000-pound bombs hit the center and northeast sections of the bridge. One approach was also cut."

"It was the second day in a row Air Force pilots were subjected to the heavy enemy defenses over the city. 'The flak was so heavy, you could just about walk on it,' Major Ronald Catton, of Jefferson, Iowa, an F-4 aircraft commander from the 8 TFW said. Clouds, especially on the morning strikes, dust and the presence of SAMs hampered complete bomb damage assessment. 'We had a lot of clouds over the target area, 'Lieutenant Colonel Obie A. Dugan, 42, of Arlington, Va., said, 'but we were able to roll in and I saw the bombs go off along the bridge.' Dugan was a flight leader for F-105s assigned to the [357 TFS,] 355 TFW."

"Thunderchief pilots were able to successfully drop their ordnance as F-4s from the 8 TFW approached the area. Catton saw his bombs walk across the northeast end of the bridge and two other bombs hit the center of the structure before his flight of F-4s was jumped by three MiGs. 'We were able to shake the first three and rose to 12,000 feet only to be jumped by three more MiGs. They chased us back down again. These spiraling chases went on three different times and after our third go around, we were getting low on fuel and had to leave.' "

"Wing commander, Colonel Robin Olds of Washington, D.C., figured, 'we must have done such a good job yesterday, that they were pretty mad today. We went round and round with the MiGs firing at each other.' No aircraft on either side were downed during the brief dogfights."

"F-105s from the 388 TFW made the final afternoon passes over the bridge. Major Donald W. Revers, 37, of Ironwood, Mich., [from the 34 TFS] said, 'the entire area was so covered with smoke and spray we had trouble seeing the bridge. I'm sure those bombs hit right on the bridge, because that wasn't all water that I saw coming up after the bombs exploded.' "

"Additional 388 TFW Thunderchiefs were credited with silencing three 85-mm AAA sites by the bridge. A SAM site, 21 KM (13 miles) northwest of the city, was also hit by the pilots who reported seeing three large secondary explosions with heavy black smoke rising from the site." (Air Force News release provided by Obie Dugan to Ron Thurlow in letter dated 20 Feb 02).

Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor from the 34 TFS was Deputy Mission Commander. His force encountered MiGs, missiles, and AAA. He flew 3.2 hours and was awarded the First Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star by Hq 7 AF Special Order G1954, dated 9 Nov 67.

During the raids, F-105s destroyed a SAM site 13 miles to the northwest of Hanoi after it had launched all of its missiles. Major William C. Campfield, Jr. was a Wild Weasel pilot with EWO Capt Harold W. Stoll from the 354 TFS, 355 TFW, credited with destroying a SAM site during this mission. Campfield was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. " ... Major Campfield was the lead of the surface-to-air missile suppression flight supporting a strike against a vital highway and railroad bridge in a heavily defended hostile area. Despite marginal weather, numerous surface-to-air missile launches, heavy and accurate antiaircraft artillery fire, and impending harassment from nearby hostile interceptor aircraft, the flight successfully disabled one surface-to-air missile site and by their aggressiveness concentrated the area defenses upon themselves enabling the strike force to attack their primary target and egress safely. ... " (Award Citation, 7 AF Special Order G1581, 4 Oct 67 provided by Bill Campfield to Ron Thurlow in 4 Jan 2001 letter.)

One F-105D from the 469 TFS, 388 TFW, was downed by flak and the pilot captured. Capt Thomas E. Norris spent the rest of the war as a POW.

At 0101Z, four 355 TFW F-105Ds in "Wolf" flight dropped 8 M-118 bombs on the Hanoi railroad and highway bridge over the Canal de Rapides (JCS 13) at coordinates 21-04-35N and 105-54-46E

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(BE 616-00011) in RP-6A, North Vietnam. Clouds directly over the bridge prevented the pilots from seeing the results of the bomb strikes. During their approach to the target, the flight saw three missiles heading for them from the south of Thud Ridge. Two missiles exploded 7,000 feet above them and the third missile passed beneath them without exploding. Three minutes after pulling off their bomb run, the flight evaded three SA-2 SAMs fired at them from a site south of Hanoi and west of the Red River.

Maj Alonzo L. Ferguson from the 354 TFS received the Silver Star for his participation in this mission. " ... Major Ferguson successfully led a major strike force of fighter-bombers which destroyed a vital highway and railroad bridge despite adverse weather, several surface-to-air missile attacks and hostile ground fire from numerous sites. ... " (Award citation provided to Ron Thurlow by Alonzo Ferguson.)

Flying a combat mission on this day was Col Robert M. White, 355 TFW Director of Operations, who was awarded the Silver Star. "Led attack force of 20 aircraft, target not specified in citation, but if memory serves me, it was a very large railyard directly across the Red River from Hanoi." (Bob White, e-mail to Ron Thurlow, 12 Sep 2001.)

Major Paul F. Koeltzow from the 34 TFS was awarded the Air Force Cross for extraordinary heroism. " ... Major Koeltzow led his force of twenty aircraft against the most heavily defended target complex in North Vietnam. Hampered by marginal weather, mechanical failures, and heavy and accurate hostile fire, Major Koeltzow led his force to the target, and although his aircraft was damaged by flak at the start of his bomb run, he overcame tremendous obstacles and continued his attack, destroying the target. Despite extensive damage to his aircraft, he engaged a flight of hostile aircraft and thwarted their impending attack on a crippled F-105. ... "

After being assigned to McConnell AFB, Maj Koeltzow was interviewed for an article in the Wichita Eagle where he told his story of the mission. " 'The weather was marginal, and when we encountered rain, three of the planes experienced mechanical failure and had to return to base. Of the 17 remaining planes, 13 of us were headed for the ... railroad bridge near Hanoi while the other four hit a secondary target.'

"The flight of four encountered ground-to-air missiles. The bridge was defended by heavy antiaircraft fire and MiGs. ... 'We were the third flight in on the bridge that day, but after the first two attacks the bridge was still standing.'

"Koeltzow's plane was heavily damaged by flak as he started his bomb run but he pressed the attack and the force succeeded in dropping one span of the bridge.

" 'As we started out of the target area, the wingman from the last flight over the target called that he had MiGs on him. He was critically damaged from flak and couldn't defend himself."

"Despite damaged to his own plane, which slowed his airspeed considerably, Koeltzow and his flight dropped their wing fuel tanks and turned back to engage the enemy planes."

" 'The MiGs broke for cover when they saw us coming,' Koeltzow said. But the crippled plane they had turned to assist was unable to recover. The pilot [Capt Tom Norris from the 469 TFS] ejected and was captured by the North Vietnamese."

"The price was high; one man missing, one plane down, seven heavily damaged, and three malfunctioned. But the mission was accomplished, a vital supply and communication line for the enemy was destroyed." (23 TFW history, Jan - Jun 68, frame 2024, showing article in the 27 April 68 issue of The Wichita Eagle.)

Mervin M. Taylor

F-105 History

Strike photography showed the southern half of the main bridge covered by smoke from bomb impacts. Post-strike photography revealed a span near the center of the bridge was down and two spans on the south end of the bridge were extensively damaged. The bypass bridge appeared to be serviceable. BDA photos on 12 August showed the bridge with 2 spans destroyed but the bridge was being bypassed by a rail bridge and rail ferries. (PACAF 16 August 67 Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 24 Jul - 13 Aug 67.)

355 TFW JOPREP JIFFY DOI 4720 OPREP-4/106 in USAF microfilm NO463, frame 252 & BG Mervin Taylor, letter to Ron Thurlow, 30 May 2000 & extract from "For Extraordinary Heroism - The Air Force Cross" by Maj Jeffery B. Floyd, provided by Ron Thurlow.

30-Sep-67

5159

Two pilots assigned to the 34 TFS in the 388 TFW at Korat completed flying 100 missions during September 1967. They were:

Lt Col Mervin M. Taylor
Maj Paul F. Koeltzow

34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm>

10-Aug-10

6708

BG (Ret) Mervyn M. Taylor died at age 86. In September 1967, he had flown his 100th mission over North Vietnam with the 34 TFS.

BRIGADIER GENERAL MERVIN M. TAYLOR

Retired Feb. 1, 1977. Died Aug. 10, 2010.

Brigadier General Mervin M. Taylor is commander of the 23rd North American Air Defense Command Region, with additional duty as commander, 23rd Air Division, U.S. Air Force Aerospace Defense Command, Duluth International Airport, Minn.

General Taylor was born in Norcatur, Kan., in 1924. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in December 1942, attended the U.S. Navy Reserve Midshipman School at the University of Notre Dame, and was commissioned an ensign in October 1944.

He was assigned to a ship of the 7th Fleet in February 1945 and participated in the Western Pacific Campaign until the end of World War II. After duty as a staff officer with the Senior U.S. Naval Commander in Tokyo, Japan, General Taylor returned to the United States and was placed in inactive Naval Reserve status in June 1946. He graduated from George Pepperdine College, Calif., with a bachelor of science degree in 1947.

In August 1947 General Taylor entered on active military duty in the U.S. Air Force and attended pilot training at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. A distinguished military graduate, he received his pilot wings and regular commission as a second lieutenant in October 1948.

His first Air Force assignment was as an RF-80 pilot with the 12th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, then the 27th Fighter Squadron of the 1st Fighter Wing; both units located at March Air Force Base, Calif. During 1949 and 1950 he was a member of the 1st Fighter Wing's F-86 aerobatic team, the "Sabre Dancers."

In February 1951, during the Korean War, General Taylor was assigned to the 80th Fighter Squadron in Korea and flew 77 combat missions in the F-80C as a flight commander.

Mervin M. Taylor

F-105 History

He returned to the United States in August 1951 and performed operational duties at squadron and group levels at Hamilton and George Air Force bases, Calif. From October to December 1956, he attended the U.S. Air Force Flying Safety School at the University of Southern California and was then assigned as assistant to the commander for safety, 27th Air Division, Norton Air Force Base, Calif.

General Taylor went to Rabat, Morocco, in October 1957, where he served two and one-half years as chief of tactical evaluation for the 316th Air Division. In May 1960 he was assigned to the University of California as assistant professor of air science. His next assignment was in July 1964 as chief, Fighter Branch, Directorate of Tactical Evaluation, 1st Air Force, Stewart Air Force Base, N.Y. In July 1965 he became commander of the F-101-equipped 60th Fighter Squadron at Otis Air Force Base, Mass.

In December 1966 General Taylor transferred to Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, as assistant deputy commander for operations, 388th Tactical Fighter Wing. During this one year in Southeast Asia, he flew 119 combat missions in the F-105; of these missions 102 were over North Vietnam. He returned to the United States in November 1967 and joined the Office of Studies and Analysis, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.

In March 1968 he completed the Department of Defense management course at Monterey, Calif., and in August 1968 was selected to attend the National War College, Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. In conjunction with his NWC studies, he participated in The George Washington University graduate program and earned a master's degree in international affairs.

General Taylor was assigned in August 1969 as vice commander, 78th Fighter Wing, at Hamilton Air Force Base. In January 1970 the wing was renamed the 1st Fighter Wing and General Taylor became commander.

In January 1971 he received his NATO assignment, first attending the NATO Defense College in Rome, Italy, then moving to 4th Allied Tactical Air Force Headquarters, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, where he assumed the position of assistant chief of staff for exercise and tactical evaluation in August 1971, and in October 1972 became deputy chief of staff for operations.

General Taylor returned to the United States in December 1973 and served as assistant deputy chief of staff, operations for Combat Operations for the North American Air Defense Command and for the Aerospace Defense Command with headquarters at Ent Air Force Base, Colo. He assumed his present position as commander of the 23rd NORAD Region in May 1975. General Taylor was assigned the additional duty of commander 23rd Air Division, on July 12, 1976.

His military decorations and awards include the Silver Star with oak leaf cluster, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross with four oak leaf clusters, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with 19 oak leaf clusters, Air Force Commendation with oak leaf cluster, Presidential Unit Citation Emblem, and the Distinguished Unit Citation Emblem.

He was promoted to the grade of brigadier general on Sept. 1, 1972, with date of rank Aug. 21, 1972.

(Current as of September 1976)

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