

Robert John Zukowski

F-105 History

07-Jun-68

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The nineteenth F-105 RTU Class 68IR graduated at the 23 TFW, McConnell AFB KS. The class started on 5 Dec 67 with 27 students. Twenty six graduated. The incoming class consisted of 2 Capt and 25 2nd Lts, all recent graduates in the top 10% of the Undergraduate Pilot Training program.

"This class is unique in that it is the first class in which all members are recent graduates of the Undergraduate Pilot Training Program. ... They have no pilot experience other than that received in pilot training. This represented a marked contrast with previous F-105 RTU classes composed of older, more mature and experienced pilots."

To compensate for their inexperience, their course was increased from 92 to 120 flying hours for a total of 78 sorties (RTU course 1111106). On 8 Mar 68, student 2Lt Frank F. Perry III was killed in the crash of F-105D 62-4226 near Raymond KS.

The class deployed for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 16 Apr - 9 May 68 with the 563 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col Joe W. Pickett. Capt Wyrewood Gowell was Top Student.

On 30 Apr 1968, while at George AFB, instructor pilot Maj Robert V. "Boris" Baird, ejected successfully from F-105D 61-0083 when it developed a flight control problem after takeoff.

The 10 May 1968 edition of The Wichita Eagle reported on the 563 TFS's return to McConnell after their deployment to George. "The 563rd Tactical Fighter Squadron at McConnell Air Force Base returned to Wichita Thursday after 23 days at George AFB, Calif. where it achieved a record 725 successful practice sorties.

"The student fighter squadrons at McConnell are sent to George for special aerial combat training as a routine but this was the first group of F-105 students to contain all recently commissioned second lieutenants.

"None of them are experienced pilots, but they are a good group,' said Maj. Robert B. Baird, flight commander. 'I experienced the only mishap during the 23-day exercise.' Baird was forced to eject from his craft April 30 when it developed flight control difficulty shortly after takeoff from George.

"McConnell is the training center for pilots in the F-105 Thunderchief fighter-bomber prior to assignment in Southeast Asia. Most students up to now had been experienced pilots who were converting from other aircraft to the 105, Baird said.

"This group of students had logged about 90 hours flying time in the Thunderchief during their training here before going to George where they flew about another 20 hours each.' Baird said. 'They will be required to complete about 10 additional hours flight time here, but they already have overseas orders for mid-June.'

"Most practice flights are over Smokey Hill Bombing and Gunnery Range near Salina, Kan.

"But when it comes time to fire on airborne targets, Kansas lacks sufficient air space.' Maj. Baird explained, so the squadron retreats to skies over the southern California desert. There they concentrate efforts on air-to-air combat practice and use of the Sidewinder missile.

"After graduation from flight training, the 26 class members will begin water survival training at Homestead AFB, Fla., before going overseas."

The students were:

Capt Wyrewood A. "Goose" Gowell	2Lt Eldon W. Joersz
Capt Kenneth G. Lindell	2Lt Charles A. Kennedy
2Lt Salvatore A. Bonacasa	2Lt Peter J. Linsley
2Lt Donald S. Brown II	2Lt Harvey A. Marshall
2Lt Robert E. Bryan	2Lt Phillip A. Miller

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2Lt Gary R. Confer	2Lt Frank F. Perry III
2Lt David Thomas Dinan III	2Lt John C. Pluta
2Lt Preston T. "Pres" Duke	2Lt Cecil L. Snell
2Lt Curtis S. "Scott" Hamme	2Lt Ronald D. Stafford
2Lt James N. Hammond	2Lt Marshall D. Tilley
2Lt Ronald A. Hoffmeyer	2Lt Richard R. Venturi
2Lt Clarence J. "Skip" Holm	2Lt Barry D. Wytenbach
2Lt David S. Hartman, Jr.	2Lt Robert John Zukowski
2Lt Lynn A. Aikman	

Twelve lieutenants -- Holm, Miller, Bryan, Wytenbach, Tilley, Confer, Dinan, Hoffmeyer, Hartman, Stafford, Venturi, and Zukowski -- were assigned to the 34 TFS and 469 TFS at Korat. Most arrived in early July 1968. Three of them were shot down: Dinan (twice) (KIA the second time), Zukowski (KIA), and Stafford (Rescued). On 13 July 1968, Confer's plane was hit over NVN and he crash landed at Udorn. He had minor injuries but the plane was destroyed.

23 TFW History, Jul - Dec 67 & Jan - Jun 68, USAF microfilm MO554 frame 2025.

31-Aug-68 30-Sep-68

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The 388 TFW history listed the aircrews assigned to the 469 TFS and the number of sorties each had flown as of the end of August and September 1968.

	Aug/Sep	
	Sorties	Counters
469 TFS		
Lt Col Hollandsworth	51/61	44/54
Lt Col Broussard	36/51	32/45
Lt Col Monts	92/110	84/99
Maj O'Donnell	56/72	52/66
Capt Hartman	74/91	62/75
Capt Shoemake	77/93	65/79
1Lt Dinan	32/49	28/40
1Lt Zukowski	31/45	28/41
Maj Avila	93/110	82/95
Maj Doty	32/37	30/35
Capt Tracey	28/41	26/36
1Lt Holm	31/44	28/40
Maj Swanson	44/60	40/55
1Lt Miller	32/48	28/41
1Lt Edmunds	26/39	23/35
Capt Houser	76/92	64/78
1Lt Bryan	29/43	28/40
1Lt Wytenbach	31/45	27/39
Maj Capling	71	59 (KIA 19 Sep 68)
Maj Carroll	70/87	62/74
Capt Lindell	32/46	28/41
1Lt Tilley	33/47	31/44
Capt Riedenauer	113/114	100/100
Capt Roeder	113/115	100/100
Capt Brown	114/115	102/102
Maj Vandevender	3/7	1/2
Col McDonald	21/32	21/32
Col Blanchard	74/85	65/75
Maj Smart	107	100
Maj Wood	82/97	70/84
Capt Howard	4/17	4/16

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Maj Oppel	3/18	3/15
Capt Young	6/22	6/18
Maj Wicks	2/4	2/2
1Lt Crotty	3/15	3/14
Capt Swarts	2/14	2/14
Maj Mizner	108	100
Capt Foley	105	100
Capt Myers	112	100
Maj Sisk	111	100
Capt Koontz	110	100 (Died 17 Aug 67)
Capt Cole	66	57
Maj Heston	107	100

Those pilots arriving in September and their mission counts for the month were:

Lt Col Gaudion	15	13
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388 TFW History, July - Sep 68, USAF microfilm NO585, frames 0247 - 0248.

30-Sep-68

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469 TFS OPERATIONS OVERVIEW, JULY - SEPTEMBER 1968

"During the period between July 1 and Sept. 30, 1968, the 'World's Finest' flew 1,555 missions against targets in Laos and North Vietnam, flying a total of 3,759 combat hours. The squadron now has a total of 38,796 combat hours and 15,989 combat sorties in the theater.

"Continued bombing restrictions limited activity during this period to operations in Route Package One in North Vietnam and certain areas of Laos. Our main objective during the period as directed by 7th AF was the interdiction of vital lines of communications in Route Pack 1. Under the direction of Lt. Col. Victor R. Hollandsworth, the 469th maintained an outstanding record of superior mission accomplishment.

"This reporting period was accented by the arrival of the first group of new Undergraduate Pilot Training graduates to fly with the 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron in well over a year. The majority of the group were 1st Lieutenants, and although they did not possess extensive flying hours or experience, the quality of their performance left little doubt as to their desire and abilities. They have proven themselves extremely capable as tactical fighter pilots.

"On Aug. 10, 1968, Capt. Peter K. Foley completed his second 100 missions over North Vietnam. In his flight were three other 469th pilots completing their 100th mission, which made it the first 500 mission flight in the history of air operations against North Vietnam. In Capt. Foley's flight were Maj. Bryant Heston, Maj. Ford H. Smart and Capt. Christopher H. Brown. Other 469th pilots completing their 100th missions during the period were Majors James J. Mizner and Donald J. Sisk, Captains William O. Harris III, Nobe R. Koontz, Ronald R. Myers, Harold E. Murk, Thomas H. Platt, Robert L. Riedenauer and David M. Roeder.

"In August and again in September, tragedy struck two members of the 469th. On Aug. 17, 1968, [a pilot] was killed in a freak landing accident at Da Nang Air Force Base in South Vietnam. On Sept. 19, 1968, [a Major] was shot down during a rocket delivery pass just north of the DMZ in North Vietnam. He ejected successfully from his disabled F-105 but was taken captive shortly after. ... Our sympathies go out to these men and to their families.

"The 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron will become an F-4E squadron on November 1968. Present members of the squadron will join the 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron here at Korat [RTAFB, Thailand] and some will transfer to the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing at Takhli. This conversion will mark both the end and beginning of one of the most significant chapters in the history of aerial warfare. The record of the F-105s of the 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron stands by itself. We are confident the new members of the 469th will carry on the outstanding accomplishments of the 469th in the months ahead."

As of 30 September 1968, the 469th had assigned 28 line pilots, two staff pilots, and five attached pilots. The pilots

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averaged 350.4 flying hours in the F-105. The pilots and their sortie counts were:

Name	Total Missions	Counters
Lt Col Victor R. Hollandsworth	61	54 (469 TFS Commander)
Lt Col James H. Broussard	51	45
Lt Col John J. "Jack" Gaudion	15	13 (2nd Tour)
Maj Vandevender	7	2
Maj John F. O'Donnell	72	66
Capt Gene D. Hartman	91	75
Capt Ronald A. Shoemake	93	79
Capt Richard E. Tracey	41	36
Capt Barry G. Swarts	14	14
1Lt Robert John Zukowski	45	41
1Lt Robert Clifton Edmunds	39	35
Maj George C. Avila, Jr.	110	95
Maj Albert E. Oppel	18	15
Capt Jack S. Houser	92	78
1Lt Robert E. Bryan	43	40
1Lt David Thomas Dinan III	49	40
1Lt Barry D. Wyttenbach	45	39
Maj Paul F. Swanson	60	55
Major Aultman Doty	37	35
Capt Douglas R. Young	22	13
Capt Joseph C. Howard	17	16
1Lt Phillip A. Miller	48	41
Maj Will Carroll, Jr.	87	74
Capt Kenneth G. Lindell	46	41
1Lt Clarence J. "Skip" Holm	44	40
1Lt Marshall D. Tilley	47	44
1Lt John W. Crotty	15	14
Col Alen K. McDonald	32	32 (388 TFW/VC)
Col Felix A. "Doc" Blanchard	85	75 (388 TFW Asst DO)
Lt Col Rufus M. "Mike" Monts III	110	99
Maj Sterling H. Wood	97	84
Maj Wicks	4	2
Capt Brown	115	102
Capt Robert L. Riedenauer	114	100
Capt David M. Roeder	115	100

<http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/history/vietnam/469th/p36.htm> & 388 TFW History, Jul - Sep 68, USAF microfilm NO585, frame 0797 & 388 TFW History, July - Sep 1968, AFHRA microfilm NO585, frames 0274 - 0282.

06-Nov-68

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The F-105s and pilots from the 469 TFS, 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand, began transferring to the 34 TFS and 44 TFS at Korat and to the 355 TFW at Takhli to make way for the assignment of F-4Es and crews from the 40 TFS due to arrive from Eglin AFB FL. The F-4Es arrived on 17 November 1968.

1Lt Gary R. Confer from the 34 TFS was one of the F-105 pilots transferred to Takhli upon the arrival of the first F-4Es. He had arrived at Korat in early July 1968 and went to the 333 TFS at Takhli in November 1968. While at Takhli, he completed his one-year combat assignment in June 1969.

1Lt Robert J. Zukowski transferred from the 469 TFS to the 34 TFS.

The 34 TFS picked up 12 F-105s from the 469 TFS (eight of the 34ths F-105s were reassigned elsewhere), the 44 TFS received eight of the 469th's F-105Ds, and two F-105s were transferred to Takhli. By the end of December 1968, the

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44 TFS was assigned five F-105Ds: 59-1771, 60-0480, 61-0086, and 61-0153.

388 TFW History, Oct - Dec 68, USAF microfilm NO585, frames 1018 and 1252 & Gary Confer, e-mail 21 April 2012.

25-Jan-69

04-Mar-69

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The runway at Korat RTAFB was closed for repairs. During the last months of 1968, "preliminary surveys showed [the need for] replacement for approximately 64 top slabs of the eight-inch overlay, replacement for some 50 bottom slabs, repair of 220 slabs with broken corners, repair of some 500 spalled (chipped) areas on the runway and probable repair to some of the foundation structure." Significant runway deterioration had been noticed since March 1966. Some of the runway concrete "was initially laid down during the Imperial Japanese forces occupation in World War II."

Fighter squadrons of the 388 TFW deployed to and operated from two other bases during the period. Forty-four F-105s and 1,068 personnel of the 34 TFS and 44 TFS operated from Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, while the F-4Es of the 469 TFS deployed to Ubon RTAFB, Thailand. The 388 TFW retained operational control over their deployed squadrons and maintained their level of combat sorties from the deployed locations. The 388 TFW's F-105s "enjoyed a higher mission effectiveness" while TDY to Takhli. The F-105s flew 901 sorties, of which 848 were combat missions with an operationally ready rate of 78.4 percent.

Lt Col Jack Sherrill was the commander of the 44 TFS when the squadron operated from Takhli. "Excellent flight line facilities but hooches and O Club were not nearly up to par as Korat. Such perks assumed more importance than justified when we were no longer 'at war' after the Nov 1 halt."

Pilots from the 44 TFS who flew from Takhli included Maj William H. Talley, Maj Ronald L. Shepard, Lt Col Richard A. "Dick" Haggren, Maj Richard P. Cisco.

1Lt Robert J. Zukowski was one of the 34 TFS pilots deploying to Takhli.

The runway repairs at Korat required 2,416 cubic meters of concrete and was done under contract to Gerson and Sons from Bangkok who employed 600 Thai workers. The work was completed on time despite a 100-percent increase in the amount of repair required.

388 TFW History, Oct - Dec 68, USAF microfilm NO585, frame 1106 and Jan - Mar 69 & Jack Sherril, e-mail, 14 May 2003.

11-Feb-69

F-105D 624256 34 TFS 388 TFW Korat Hit by 37-mm AAA while attacking a POL storage area in Laos. Crashed in Laos. 17-07N 106-03E 1Lt Robert John Zukowski 34 TFS pilot was MIA. Call sign: "Speedo 01". Combat loss during the 34 TFS's deployment from the 388 TFW to Takhli RTAFB during runway repairs at Korat. "On a strike mission over Laos, ... Zukowski's F-105D made a successful strike on the primary target. He was directed to his next target by an airborne Forward Air Controller. But as he began his attack run, his aircraft entered an inverted roll and crashed. Enemy anti-aircraft units were known to be in the area, but no ground fire was observed. The FAC saw no parachute nor heard any beeper signals." This mission was Zukowski's 122nd combat mission since his assignment to the 34 TFS on 12 June 1968.

1Lt Robert J. Zukowski flew as Speedo 01 in a flight of two on a strike mission to Logistics Complex SE4270M in the Steel Tiger region of Laos at location 17-08-05N and 106-03-45E. Witnesses to the loss were Maj Sheldon H. Cooper and Maj Lawrence K. Whalley. Lt Zukowski crashed in the target area at 12:35.

"On 11 February 1969, Lt Zukowski was on a strike mission over Laos in a flight of two (2) F-105 aircraft, which departed Takhli RTAFB at 1107 hours local. The flight was designated as Speedo and Lt Zukowski was Speedo Lead. After delivering their hard ordnance on the primary target (171215N/1060823E) they were directed to the secondary target by the Forward Air Controller (FAC), a logistic complex (170805N/1060345E). The FAC marked the target area with a rocket. Speedo #2 saw Speedo Lead's bombs impact in the target area and asked the FAC where he wanted his ordnance dropped. Before the FAC could answer, Speedo #2 saw an explosion on the ground immediately after which the FAC said, 'I think your lead just when in, hold high and dry,' or words to that effect.

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Speedo #2 then aborted his run and orbited the area. Speedo #2 estimated the time of 12 - 16 seconds between Speedo Lead's ordnance release and aircraft impact. The FAC did not see a chute and there was no beeper contact. Speedo Lead's aircraft appeared to slip over inverted and then crash. No SAR efforts [were] placed into effect. The area of the crash is heavily foliated, approximately 1300 feet elevation with several roads and trails in the area. It is known to be a heavily defended area with 37-mm, 57-mm and ZPU, but the FAC did not observe any ground fire at the time of the crash." ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 5-023, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3.)

"Three joint U.S.-Lao teams in 1993 and 1996 recovered aircraft and crew-related debris, as well as human remains. The remains of ... Zukowski (were) shipped from the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii to the Air Force Mortuary, Travis AFB, California, on Wednesday, Oct. 30, 1996." He was buried in Resurrection Cemetery near Chicago.

1Lt Zukowski was born 30 October 1943. He entered the service from Chicago, Illinois. His name appears on the Vietnam War Memorial Wall on panel 32W line 18.

DOD News Release release MIA (KIA) October 30, 1996 & <http://www.pownetwork.org/bios/z/z003.htm>

09-May-69

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The 34 TFS flew its last F-105 mission before it converted to F-4Es at the 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

The F-4Es were delivered on 11 May 1969 by the 40 TFS from Eglin AFB FL. The 40th changed its designation to the 34 TFS when it arrived at Korat. "...They were met with cold beer, a lei, a parade of smoke bombs, water hoses, and welcomed through most of the streets of Korat ...". The 40th designation returned to Eglin.

The final 34 TFS squadron commander with F-105s was Lt Col Harvey W. Prosser, Jr. When the squadron converted to F-4Es, he was replaced by Lt Col Joseph M. Potts. Col Prosser was reassigned to Kirtland AFB, NM where he flew the F-4 and F-104.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

	Date	F-105	Last Name	Fate
1.	03 Jun 66	58-1171	Pielin	Rescued
2.	15 Jun 66	62-4377	Kelley	Rescued
3.	21 Jun 66	62-4358	Sullivan	KIA
4.	30 Jun 66	62-4224	Nierste	Rescued
5.	15 Jul 66	59-1761	Hamby	Rescued
6.	20 Jul 66	62-4308	Lewis	KIA
7.	21 Jul 66	62-4227	Tiffin	KIA
8.	06 Aug 66	62-4315	Rutherford	Rescued
9.	17 Sep 66	61-0191	Rutherford	Rescued
10.	10 Oct 66	62-4300	Bullock	Died
11.	10 Jan 67	62-4265	Gauley	KIA
12.	19 Mar 67	61-0123	Austin	KIA
13.	05 Apr 67	62-4395	Youngblood	Survived
14.	12 May 67	63-8269 (F)	Stewart	KIA
			Pitman	KIA
15.	15 May 67	62-4429 (F)	Heiliger	POW
			Pollard	POW
16.	02 Jun 67	61-0190	Smith	POW
17.	04 Jun 67	61-0148	Kough	Rescued
18.	15 Jun 67	61-0213	Swanson	KIA
19.	17 Oct 67	61-0205	Andrews	POW
20.	17 Oct 67	62-4326	Odell	POW
21.	17 Oct 67	60-0425	Sullivan	POW
22.	27 Oct 67	62-4231	Flynn	POW
23.	28 Oct 67	62-4356	Waldrop	Survived
24.	19 Nov 67	58-1170	Vissotzky	POW
25.	04 Feb 68	60-5384	Lasiter	POW
26.	14 Feb 68	60-0418	Elliot	KIA
27.	15 Apr 68	61-0206	Metz	POW Died
28.	25 Apr 68	60-0436	Givens	Died
29.	14 May 68	61-0132	Bass	Died
30.	28 May 68	61-0194	Ingvalson	POW
31.	31 May 68	60-0409	Beresik	KIA
32.	08 Jun 68	61-0055	Light	Rescued
33.	13 Jul 68	60-0453	Confer	Survived
34.	01 Sep 68	60-0512	Thaete	Rescued
35.	17 Nov 68	61-0092	Dinan	Survived
36.	11 Feb 69	62-4256	Zukowski	KIA
37.	17 Mar 69	61-0104	Dinan	KIA
38.	29 Mar 69	62-4270	Stafford	Rescued
39.	03 Apr 69	62-4269	Christianson	KIA

388 TFW History, Apr - Jun 69, USAF microfilm NO586