

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

F-105 History

24-Nov-67

237

The fifteenth F-105 RTU Class 68DR graduated at McConnell AFB KS. The class started on 23 June 1967 with 22 student pilots. They deployed for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 3 - 22 Nov 67 with the 563 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col Joe W. Pickett.

Members of the class and their SEA squadron assignments were:

Maj Julius W. "Z" Szenegeto - 357 TFS
Lt Col Rufus M. "Mike" Monts III - 469 TFS
Lt Col Donald L. Nangle - 354 TFS
Maj Robert E. Belli - 354 TFS
Maj David B. Coon - 357 TFS
Maj Robert F. Daley - ???
Maj John P. Gee - 354 TFS
Maj Melvin L. Irwin - 34 TFS
Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. - 34 TFS
Capt Dean C. Wood - 357 TFS

Maj Otto M. Stewart - 357 TFS
Maj William A. Wiese - 354 TFS
Capt Roger T. Chesson, Jr. - 333 TFS
Capt Gary G. Durkee - 34 TFS
Capt Nobe Ray Koontz, Jr. - 469 TFS
Capt James J. Mizner - 469 TFS
Capt George M. Nygaard - 354 TFS
Capt Lamont H. "Monty" Pharmer - 34 TFS
Capt Robert L. Riedenaer - 469 TFS
Capt David M. Roeder - 469 TFS

"On 22 November 1967, the unit returned to McConnell AFB [from George AFB]. On this return mission the 563 TFS and Class 68DR completed the first 'Operation Full Sweat'. Operation Full Sweat was designed to simulate very closely conditions that exist during F-105 operations in Southeast Asia. This was very realistic and very appropriate to complete training, since the entire class had received assignments for combat duty in SEA." (23 TFW history)

When asked about "Operation Full Sweat", Capt Monty Pharmer replied, "I don't ever remember hearing that name. Towards the end of our training at McConnell, we made live ordnance deliveries, did night refueling and in general, flew in more mission oriented flights. ... I thought what we were doing was part of the normal training sequence." (Monty Pharmer, e-mail 16 Sep 2006.)

Maj Robert E. Belli was presented the top over-all student award.

Capt William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. won the Top Gun and top academic awards. Thomas had earned his wings while assigned to the 3615 Student Squadron, Craig AFB AL in 1962 and 1963. Since 28 December 1963, he had been assigned to the 34th Bomb Squadron, Wright-Patterson AFB OH, first as a B-52 copilot then as pilot. As a 1Lt copilot, he had been a member of the senior standardization board. (Bill Thomas, AF Form 11)

Thomas was a 1962 graduate of the Citadel. Jake Shuler, also a student at the Citadel, recalled, "Although Bill and I were in different companies/battalions, we were close friends since we were both in Air Force ROTC and had pilot contracts. ... He was the most physically fit member of our class and an exceptional individual in so many other ways." (Jake Shuler e-mail 1 June 2010).

One of the student pilots in this RTU class, Monty Pharmer, recalled vying for class honors with Thomas. "Bill was a great guy and a real competitor. In F-105 training at McConnell he and I were in constant competition to finish number one in the class. As I remember, he finished No. 1 and I was No. 2." (Monty Pharmer e-mail 2 June 2010.)

Pharmer first entered pilot training as an Aviation Cadet in 1956. He graduated from Basic Pilot Training at Bryan AFB, Texas, in November 1957. From there he went into Advanced Pilot Training and Fighter Gunnery in the F-86 at Williams AFB, Arizona, and then into the F-100 Fighter Gunnery program at Nellis AFB, Nevada. "At the time of graduating from that program my entire class was "Shanghai'd" into SAC B-47s. What a bummer. It was my last choice out of Pilot Training. ... I spent 5 years [in B-47s] and finally was upgraded to Aircraft Commander in 1962. Still trying to get out of SAC, I volunteered for the Air Commando program and was fortunate enough to get an assignment to Panama in the C-47."

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In June 1964, he was assigned to the 605th Air Commando Squadron located at Howard AFB, CZ. For three years he flew counterinsurgency missions throughout South and Central America and the Caribbean area. There he also trained Latino pilots in the C-47 in counterinsurgency operations and how to land at night in sugar cane fields, highways, golf courses, etc. As he recalled, "In retrospect it was almost as hazardous as combat."

Capt Pharmer was initially assigned to F-105 training at Nellis AFB, Class 68-B in April 1967, and attended a jet re-qualification course in the T-33 at MacDill AFB, Florida prior to arriving there. At Nellis he found that the program was backed up with entrants and he would have to remain there for several months before he could start training. As a result, he requested a transfer to the F-105 training program at McConnell AFB in Kansas and was reassigned there to F-105 RTU Class 68DR. (Monty Pharmer, e-mails 16 and 25 Sep 2006 & 1 and 4 June 2010.)

Two pilots from this RTU class received seven weeks of Wild Weasel training at Nellis in WW Class 68WW III-18 before reporting to their SEA squadrons. They were:

Maj Elmer W. Otto to the 354 TFS at Takhli.
Maj Francis A. "Frosty" Sheridan to the 44 TFS at Korat.

Since 19 April 1960, Maj Frosty Sheridan had been a B-52 copilot and B-52 Aircraft Commander, where his last assignment was with the 337 Bomb Squadron, Dyess AFB, TX.

23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 67, USAF microfilm MO554, frames 1063 - 1066 & Francis A. Sheridan's AF Form 11 Officer Military Record.

04-Jan-68

3497

Four flights of F-105s from the 388 TFW struck the Lang Son railroad and highway bridge (JCS 18) interdicting both the north and south approaches. The planes dropped 72 750-pound bombs cutting the north and south approaches.

"The flak suppression aircraft expended 12 CBU-24s, one CBU-29 and 61 M-117s on four active flak sites near the bridge. Pilots estimated all four sites were silenced." (388 TFW History)

Strike activities against the Lang Son railroad bridge complex on 4 and 5 January were partially successful. The main bridge was attacked on 4 January. "Prestrike coverage of one of the bypasses on 5 January showed 3 moveable spans adjacent to the rail lines. Post-strike coverage of the same bridge on 6 January revealed that strikes on 5 January had destroyed one of the supporting piers, thus rendering the bridge unserviceable.

"Waco" flight from the 34 TFS was one of Korat's four strike flights today. The flight left Korat at 1335. The flight line up was:

#1 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis, Mission Commander
#2 - Capt Carl William Lasiter, POW 4 Feb 68
#3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0462.
#4 - Lt Col James B. Ross

This was Maj Armstrong's 47th combat mission. "We went to the 2nd alternate target which was the Lang Son Railroad Bridge up right close to the Chicom border. We went in via the water route. We anticipated poor visibility because of the haze we had yesterday. We also anticipated a heavy MiG reaction. We were pleasantly surprised on both counts. There wasn't a cloud in the sky from the coast inland. There was some haze but we were able to pick up the target about 15 miles out. There was some light 37/57-mm flak as we rolled in and some 85-mm when the trailing flights started down. We were a little bit shallow on our dive angle and had a strong headwind for bombing. Consequently we seemed to hit a little short of the bridge. There were many MiG calls but no engagements. Vern Ellis took a minor hit but nobody else got hit." The mission lasted for 3 hours 40 minutes. (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100

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mission combat log, pg 20.)

Having graduated from McConnell's F-105 RTU on 24 November 1967, Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. arrived at Korat and was assigned to the 34 TFS. En route, he had attended the TAC SEA Survival School (5 days) and the PACAF Jungle Survival School (5 days).

388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584, frames 0459 and 0495 & Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 1 - 15 January 1968 & Bill Thomas, AF Form 11.

21-Jan-68

6566

Capt Jacob C. Shuler from the 34 TFS flew to Udorn on Korat's C-47 to retrieve a repaired F-105D that had landed there earlier. The pilot, Capt William A. Thomas, Jr., also from the 34th, had diverted to Udorn and had damaged the plane's bottom speed brake pedal on landing.

Capt Shuler logged 1/2 hour for the ferry flight back to Korat. It was his last flight in an F-105.

"From 11 January until 27 January, I was scheduled to fly in the morning or afternoon strike force, but only if the primary target was to be struck. Otherwise, a newly arrived pilot would fly the secondary or tertiary target in my place. The weather for this period of time was bad each day and, except for a short maintenance flight on 21 January, I was not to fly the Thud again."

On 27 January 1968, he went on a two-week leave to the States. When he returned to Korat, he was reassigned to Hq 7th Air Force in Saigon.

Jake Shuler combat mission spreadsheet and e-mail 11 Jan 2011.

01-Feb-68

5865

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, flew his 77th combat mission. His target was the Ron ferry in RP-1.

Capt William A. Thomas, Jr., also from the 34 TFS, received the Air Medal for "Meritorious Achievement While Participating in Aerial Flight" for the period 22 January - 1 February 1968. The award certificate was approved on 21 February 1968 and was signed by General William A. Mommyer, Commander of Hq 7th Air Force, and Harold Brown, Secretary of the Air Force.

Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 1 Feb 68.

04-Feb-68

F-105D 605384 34 TFS 388 TFW Korat Hit by a MiG-21 AAM while en route to the Thai Nguyen Barracks (JCS 60). Crashed in RP-5, North Vietnam. 21-37N 105-17E Capt Carl William Lasiter 34 TFS pilot ejected and became a POW. Released 14 Mar 73. Call sign: "Pistol 04". "... A small strike force (from the 388 TFW) attacked a target in the Thai Nguyen area. The force consisted of one F-105 Iron Hand flight, one F-105 strike flight, and two F-4D MIGCAP flights. ... Inbound to the target, the strike force had received MIG warnings ... indicating two MIG-21's headed northwest out of Phuc Yen While the (F-4D) flight turned left to attack, the flight members lost sight of the MIG-21, and an F-105 was destroyed by his air-to-air missile. The American pilot safely ejected moments before his aircraft rolled over and disappeared into the undercast."

Capt Carl W. Lasiter flew as Pistol 04, in a flight of four, on a strike mission to Thai Nguyen Barracks. Other members of Pistol flight were:

- #1 Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen
- #2 Maj Carl E. Light
- #3 Maj James E. Daniel, Jr.

The flight took off from Korat at 06:25. Maj Lasiter was shot down at 07:52.

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"Major Carl B. Light, Pistol 2, described the incident involving Capt Lasiter as follows: '... As we approached a point about 30 miles west of the target, I saw Pistol Four burst into flames and immediately afterward a MIG-21 approached from his six o'clock position and pulled up and to the left of Pistol Flight (Pistol 4 was on the left and Pistol 2 on the right). I called that Pistol Four was hit and called the MIG-21 when I saw it. Another MIG-21 then crossed over the flight from right to left. I heard Pistol 4 make no calls. His wings rocked once and he went into a right descending turn, burning from the fuselage and right wing. I saw the pilot eject and separate from his seat, but due to watching the MIG's I did not see his chute open.' Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen, Pistol 1, confirmed a good chute: '... Downed member was hit by AIM/MIG-21 at 0725L in the vicinity of 2137/10517. I last saw him in the vicinity of 2137/10517. I did not see him eject. I did see man-seat separation. I did see a good chute. I did not hear a beeper. Weather in the area where member is down was overcast about 6000. Type of terrain is mts. and lightly populated. Received a call that #4 was hit by a MIG-21. Observed #4 on fire. A/C rolled inverted and pilot ejected at about 12 to 14,000'. No beeper was heard, but pilot was observed in chute. MIG observed in very nose high climbing turn.' Search and rescue operations were not conducted due to location." ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 4-025, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3.)

On Robert W. Smith's autobiography web site, Capt Monty Pharmer described Lasiter's loss.

"My special friend Gary Durkee and I were in separate flights. I was with Bill Thomas [Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.] and two others. Gary's flight included Carl Lassiter. Carl had more missions and we respected him as one of the 'Old Heads'. We all had breakfast together.....it was raining and still dark when we got to our planes. The mission was uneventful into Laos. We crossed into North Vietnam in the vicinity of Dien Bien Phu, the battlefield of the French downfall. The weather ahead looked bad with a solid overcast and a lower cloud deck that could preclude us from descending into the target area. About that time our F-4 flight cover started calling out Migs at our rear. No sooner had they called than Carl reported that he had been hit by an air-to-air missile.... he was ejecting. He had a good chute as he drifted down into NVN. The F-4s pursued the Migs and got a hit on one.

"The mission was cancelled due to weather and we weren't too disappointed about that. It was a shame that Carl was down and the mission was never accomplished. The one good bit of news we received almost immediately from our excellent intelligence was that the Mig that shot Carl down had been hit and had crashed on landing at Yen Bai-the pilot was killed-he had been one of the NVN 'aces'-their best. Carl was captured and spent the next 5½ years as a P.O.W." (Robert W. Smith's autobiography web site at http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch_5/iv.html)

Carl Lasiter was born in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Aces & Aerial Victories, pg 76 & U.S. Navy CNA Loss/Damage Data Base

11-Feb-68

4873

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS flew a mission to support the Marines at Khe Sanh in South Vietnam but weather diverted them to hit a target in Laos. The flight took off at 0545. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0167
- #2 - Capt John E. Hartman
- #3 - Capt Gary G. Durkee
- #4 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.

It was Maj Armstrong's 63rd mission. "This was a Bravo frag all of the way. Our assigned target was near the besieged town of Khe Sanh in South Vietnam. The weather was clobbered there so we bombed a supply area, which was just across the Laotian border. All of the bombs were on target and were swung up through Pack I for a weather check and counter. The wingmen did a good job!" Their mission lasted for 2 hours 30 minutes.

Capt Lawrence L. Bogemann, who had arrived in the 34 TFS this month, flew his local check-out flight today. He was

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a KC-135 copilot in SAC and had trained at Nellis in the F-105. (Larry Bogemann, e-mail 27 April 10.)

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 25 - 26.

12-Feb-68

4874

"Simmer" flight from the 34 TFS used Commando Club to hit a target in Laos. The flight took off from Korat at 0650. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0161
- #2 - Capt John E. Hartman
- #3 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #4 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.

It was Maj Armstrong's 64th combat mission. "This was a 1st alternate Commando Club target in Laos. It was about 10 miles east of Sam Nuea. The tankers got fouled up on our fragged drop-off time. Consequently, we dropped off late and had to hustle to try to make up the time. When we dropped, we dropped our bombs through a 10,000 ft overcast so we couldn't see the impact. We made a weather recce of Pack III and IV near Laos for our counter." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 20 minutes.

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 26.

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 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.

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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 Mui 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, Mui Ghia Pass was known to have the fiercest defenses on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Reconnaissance aircraft transited it at 600 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,

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

F-105 History

unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 39 - 40.

15-Feb-68

4877

"Crossbow" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a road in RP 4. The four-ship took off at 0950. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0161
- #2 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #3 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #4 - Capt Gary G. Durkee

This was Maj Armstrong's 67th combat mission. "We were going to an army barracks 8 miles SW of Hanoi and were on the tankers when we got word to divert to Cricket Control. Apparently, they found that the weather was clobbered when they got the satellite picture after we were airborne. Cricket was flooded and there were no FACs up so I took my flight into Route 7 and went in about 35 miles into the Package (Pack IV) and when we didn't find anything, we dropped our bombs on a road and came home." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 55 minutes.

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 27

16-Feb-68

4878

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS flew an ineffectual radar bombing mission into North Vietnam and Laos. The flight took off at 0540. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0518
- #2 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #3 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen
- #4 - Capt Lamont H. Pharmer

This was Maj Armstrong's 68th combat mission. "Today was really a farce. My flight had the radar drop in Pack V, near Phu Tho as a first alternate target since the weather was too bad for visual bombing. We got almost to drop and they lost us on radar so we went down into Laos to an alternate target and tried twice to radar drop down there but again they lost us. We wound up with no fuel and no place to bomb so we dropped our bombs safe at Udorn Range and came home. 3+30 and 24 wasted bombs!"

Today was the first combat mission over North Vietnam for Capt Joseph S. Sechler, also from the 34th. His flight lineup was:

- #1 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #2 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler
- #3 - Maj Roger Dean Ingvanson
- #4 - Capt John S. Murphy

Capt Sechler logged 2:30 flying hours.

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 27 & Joe Sechler flight log via email 28 Apr 10.

24-Feb-68

4883

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS took off from Korat at 0610 to bomb a causeway in RP-1. Their line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4361
- #2 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.
- #3 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #4 - Capt John E. Hartman

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This was Maj Armstrong's 74th combat mission. "The original # 2 man, Bill Thomas [Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.] aborted on the ground so Buddy Barner took his place. There had been a thunderstorm the night before and there was extensive cloudiness and light rain at take-off time. We had to make individual climbs to get on top of the weather. We Sky Spotted a causeway over near Dong Hoi. Coming home, we ran into cloud tops up to 22,000 feet and made a weather penetration into the field." They flew for 2 hours 45 minutes.

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS also flew a mission to Dong Hoi in RP-1. It was his 90th combat sortie into North Vietnam.

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 29 Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 24 Feb 68.

04-Mar-68

4888

The four pilots in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a target in the southern part of North Vietnam. They took off at 1410 and returned after 3 hours 5 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #2 - Capt John S. Murphy
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4270
- #4 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen

This was Maj Armstrong's 79th combat mission. "We were first alerted that we would be going to Pack VI but were diverted before we could brief. We finally wound up going all of the way to the Gulf to refuel and coming back to drop our bombs via Combat Sky Spot in the southern extremity of North Vietnam."

Under Hillsboro control, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Gator 2" to attack troops and trenches in South Vietnam. "50%. 20 KBA. Small arms fire." He then flew armed recce in RP-1. "No significant sightings." It was his 48th combat mission.

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 30 - 31 Rufus Dye Mission History log.

08-Mar-68

4891

The four pilots in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS tried to destroy a crashed helicopter in Laos. They took off at 1425 and returned after 3 hours 5 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 59-1771
- #3 - Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr.
- #4 - Maj Douglas A. Roysdon

This was Maj Armstrong's 82nd combat missions. "I swapped places with Bill Thomas when we were executed 1st alt to give him some more leading practice. We were sent over to bomb one of our helicopters that had crashed on a mountain in Laos, south of Mu Gia Pass. For some reason they wanted it knocked out. Well there was a little puffy cloud right over the hill and we had to come in very shallow to hit it and consequently none of us got a direct hit on it. We then went over to Quang Khe and found some boats in the river. We made two strafing passes apiece on these boats. Then we came home out of Pack I."

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 31 - 32.

09-Mar-68

4892

The four pilots in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS did a radar bomb drop in Laos. They took off at 1425 and returned after 2 hours 15 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. F-105 History

- #2 - Maj Ivor K. Goodrich
- #3 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0219

This was Maj Armstrong's 83rd combat mission. "This was a pretty uneventful radar drop up in Laos. There was a big thunderstorm between the target and Thailand that we had to skirt. We made a recce of the 'Fish's Mouth' but it was pretty well clobbered so we came on home."

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS flew his 95th mission against a target near Quang Tri in RP-1, North Vietnam.

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 31 - 32 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 9 Mar 68.

13-Mar-68

6623

Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (First Oak Leaf Cluster) for heroism on a mission he flew today. "... Captain Thomas observed six surface-to-air missiles being guided towards himself and his flight lead. Realizing that his leader did not have the missiles in sight, and could not avoid them without visual contact, Captain Thomas valiantly elected to remain with, and guide his leader away from the missiles even though it dramatically decreased his own chances of evasion. Captain Thomas directed a series of violent evasive maneuvers, which prevented the missiles from destroying his flight leader. ..."

Award citation under Hq 7th AF SO G-3492, 15 Nov 68.

15-Mar-68

2249

Capt Bill Harris, 469 TFS, 388 TFW, flew F-105D 61-0092 on his 43rd combat mission from Korat RTAFB, Thailand. It was a FAC-controlled mission in RP-1, North Vietnam. The F-105s dropped CBU's on trucks and encountered heavy 37-mm AAA. Sortie length was 3 hours 10 minutes.

Other F-105s from the 388 TFW dropped 24 750-pound bombs on the Pou Nam Kong interdiction point along Route 191 in northwestern North Vietnam. This route "... links China with Dien Bien Phu near the Laotian border, and can be used to transfer troops and supplies into Laos through North Vietnam. While egressing, the flight observed approximately 10 trucks along the highway and reportedly damaged or destroyed four with 20-mm cannon fire."

The F-105s strafing the trucks were in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS that left Korat at 1410 for their 3-hour mission. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Roger Dean Ingvalson (POW, 28 May 68)
- #2 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 15th combat mission
- #3 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-5381

This was Maj Armstrong's 87th combat mission. "We went as a flight of 4 to our first alternate target which was a road up in Pack V. As a matter of fact, it was in the northwestern part of Pack V, north of Dien Bien Phu. We found the road segment and dropped on it causing land slides in a few places. We then made a reconnaissance of the road and I spotted a vehicle. We went back and made 2 strafing passes apiece. We estimated that we saw 10 - 15 trucks and damaged/destroyed 4 - 5."

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong elaborated on this mission. "On the 15th of March, we went to an alternate target up In Pack V near the Chinese border. We were to drop our bombs above a road segment and create a slide that would close the road to re-supply from China. On the way up we passed close to Dien Bien Phu where the French had made an unsuccessful stand against the Vietnamese communists in 1954. It was a position surrounded by mountains that seemed to me on first glance that it was a poor place to make a defensive stand. History proved that so I wasn't all that

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

F-105 History

clairvoyant.

"We dropped our bombs above the road for the desired effect. There was no defensive fire that we saw. I was the #4 man and as I pulled off the target, I noticed a couple of trucks just off the road in the lower valley. I called that I was turning around to strafe them and I did and set two of them on fire. The rest of the flight returned and took up the battle. The visibility was so poor that I was worried that we would run into each other as we were starting to make opposite strafing runs down the valley. So I called to knock it off and we headed home. We estimated that there were 10-15 trucks down there and that we had destroyed 4-5.

"When the Intelligence types reviewed our film, they discovered that there were closer to 75 trucks of all sorts either on that road or under the trees. It was obviously a road building crew that we had happened upon. We hadn't bombed up there in my experience so we had apparently caught them unawares. When we reported this on debriefing, the next day's alternate target was back to the same place. This flight didn't see any trucks but did see quite a bit of defensive fire and one aircraft was hit but was able to recover to Korat." (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 42.)

Capt Sechler, "Scuba 02", logged 2:55 flight time. "Took a small hit in water injection tank."

Bill Harris, letter 19 March 2001 & 388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584 frame 0506 & Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 33 & Joe Sechler mission log via e-mail 28 Apr 10.

14-Apr-68

6801

Also, on 14 April 1968, the 34 TFS launched "Bass" flight. The lineup was:

#1 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.

#2 - Capt Darrell J. Ahrens

#3 - Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr. flying his 60th combat mission.

#4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 29th combat mission two days after he returned from R&R in Bangkok. He logged 2:40 flying time.

Col Dye recorded the mission in his Mission History where he listed his call sign as "Bass 1". They dropped through weather using Sky Spot on a troop concentration in Steel Tiger. They then did armed recce in RP-1. "No significant sightings."

Joe Sechler, mission log via e-mail 28 Apr 10 & Rufus Dye Mission History log

16-Apr-68

6567

The 34 TFS, 388 TFW, launched "Waco" flight from Korat. The lineup was:

#1 - Maj Eugene Paul Beresik

#2 - Capt Anthony F. Germann

#3 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.

#4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 31st combat mission. He logged 2:50 flying time.

Joe Sechler, mission log via e-mail 28 Apr 10.

17-Apr-68

6626

Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. from the 34 TFS, received orders for his next assignment. He was to report "PCS w/PCA" to the 12 TFS, Kadena AB, Okinawa. His reporting date was 20 September 1968.

PCS Order, 388 TFW Combat Support Group, Special Order AB-651 dated 17 April 1968.

23-Apr-68

6568

The 34 TFS, 388 TFW, launched "Crossbow" flight from Korat. The lineup was:

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

F-105 History

- #1 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #2 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 35th combat mission. He logged 2:50 flying time.
- #3 - Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr. flying his 67th mission. (NOTE: His Mission History date was 22 Apr 68.)
- #4 - Lt Col Dorwyn D. Shaver

They attacked a storage area in northern Laos. "100 %. Road cut. 37 MM." They then flew armed recce in RP-1. "No significant sightings."

Joe Sechler, mission log via e-mail 28 Apr 10 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.

14-May-68

F-105D 610132 34 TFS 388 TFW Korat Operational loss. Mid-air collision with his flight lead in F-105D 60-0428. Crashed 93 NM NE of Korat RTAFB, Thailand. 15-35N 103-35E Maj Seymour R. Bass 34 TFS pilot died in mid-air crash with his flight lead. Call sign: "Hayfire 02". "On 14 May, an F-105D piloted by Maj Seymour R. Bass, 34 TFS, was involved in a mid-air collision with his flight lead, Capt. William A. Thomas Jr. [in F-105D 60-0428, "Hayfire 01"], also from the 34 TFS. At approximately 1605L, approximately 90 NM northeast of Korat RTAFB, Thomas was thrown violently against the left side of his cockpit, striking his helmet against the canopy. He immediately looked to the right for Bass and could not see him. Thomas then looked to the left and saw Bass below and to the left, crossing from left to right, and descending sharply. After the collision, Bass' aircraft proceeded north approximately eight miles before impacting in a dry rice paddy. The aircraft was in a virtual vertical, extremely high-speed dive when it contacted the ground. Bass evidently ejected only a short time before impact, as his body was found less than one-half mile from the crash site. The primary cause of this accident was found to be operator factor in that the pilot of Hayfire Two (Maj Bass) failed to control his aircraft to avoid collision with Hayfire Lead. Adverse weather also contributed to the accident. ... Hayfire two, either lost sight of Hayfire Lead or feared doing so. Rather than execute the standard Lost Wingman procedure, he initiated a blind rejoin or a high overtake closure maneuver. He was late in recognizing his closure rate and passed closely beneath and behind Lead's aircraft, probably encountering jet blast and wash. In an attempt to avoid an overshoot, he abruptly reversed his crossover attitude. This reversal combined with the effect of the lead's wash to produce a 'JC' maneuver resulted in collision."

Maj Bass' F-105D 61-0132 was assigned to the 34 TFS. Capt Thomas' F-105D 60-0428 to the 469 TFS.

History of Flight

"Hayfire, a flight of two F-105D aircraft, was scheduled for a combat tactical mission on the afternoon of 14 May 1968. Mission planning and flight briefings were standard and conducted in accordance with applicable briefing guides and checklists. Capt William A. Thomas 34th Tac Ftr Sqdn, in F-105D-10RE SN 600428. Major Seymour R. Bass, 34 Tac Ftr Sqdn, in F-105D-20RE SN610132, was Hayfire Two.

"Hayfire flight became airborne at 1405 hours local, 14 May 1968. Engine start, takeoff, prestrike refueling, and ingress to the target area were normal and without incident. Thunderstorms were encountered during the flight, including some in the prestrike refueling area. The flight penetrated three or four build-ups later described by Hayfire Lead as 'pretty bumpy'. Lead's aircraft evidenced incidental precipitation erosion damage to fiberglass leading edge areas. The fraged target area was clear, however, and both aircraft delivered their bombs on target. The flight then conducted road reconnaissance as briefed until reaching their prebriefed Bingo fuel state. No ground fire was observed and none was reported by the FAC. Aircraft were checked visually for damage during egress.

"Upon termination of road reconnaissance, it was necessary to divert approximately 100 miles south of the direct route to the poststrike refueling point in order to avoid thunderstorm activity. Rendezvous was accomplished in intermittent weather conditions but Bingo level had been set sufficiently high to preclude any fuel shortage. Each aircraft had 4000 - 5000 pounds of fuel remaining at rendezvous. While Hayfire One was on the tanker, weather was again encountered. Upon completion of refueling, Hayfire One remained in the pre-contact position until the tanker completed a turn which brought them again to visual flight conditions. At this time, Hayfire Lead found Hayfire two at

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

F-105 History

5 o'clock approximately 2,000 feet low. He had apparently become separated from the formation without making a radio call or executing standard Lost Wingman procedures. Hayfire Lead directed two to go A/B to expedite refueling. He complied and completed refueling in visual conditions without further incident. Both aircraft refueled to 8000 pounds and departed the tanker in visual conditions at 14,000 feet.

"Hayfire flight departed the tanker approximately 130 NM NE of Korat and reentered clouds during a climb to 17,000 feet en route to the initial approach fix. Hayfire Lead was flying instruments, with two on his right wing. Although very light turbulence was encountered, light conditions were good. Hayfire Lead stated that he could see Two, one or two ship lengths out and back, with his helmet visor lowered during his frequent checks on Two's position.

"The flight was under control of Lion GCI at this time for standard GCI/GCA recovery. Hayfire Lead had attempted, without success, to contact Apache, Korat Command Post, to report mission results, and had returned to Lion frequency. His return was acknowledged by both Lion and Hayfire Two.

"At approximately 1605 local, approximately 90 NM on the 068 degree radial of Korat TACAN, Hayfire Lead was thrown violently against the left side of his cockpit, striking his helmet against the canopy. He immediately looked to the right for Hayfire Two and could not see him. Hayfire Lead then looked to the left and saw Hayfire Two below and to the left crossing from left to right, and descending sharply relative to his, Hayfire One's, aircraft. He estimates Hayfire Two was about 100 feet away when he lost him in the clouds. The absolute attitude of Hayfire Lead at this time is not known, as he was having control difficulties. His first recognizable attitude was a 120 degree left bank, nose down. Hayfire Lead recovered control at approximately the same time he reached visual conditions at 1,200 feet. Full right rudder and full right aileron trim was necessary to maintain straight and level flight.

"Capt Thomas attempted radio contact with Hayfire Two, and also asked Lion to attempt contact. Lion had negative results from both voice and radar interrogations. A tanker aircraft some 30 miles behind Hayfire Flight reported hearing a beeper to Lion. Capt Thomas also initiated SAR efforts on Guard Channel and requested Lion to scramble a rescue helicopter from Korat RTAFB through their land line to Korat approach control. He then performed a controllability check, and determined that control was satisfactory down to 215 KCAS and accomplished a straight in landing at Korat RTAFB at 1641 local.

"Subsequent to the collision, Hayfire Two's aircraft proceeded north approximately eight miles before impacting in a dry rice paddy. The aircraft was in a virtually vertical extremely high speed dive when it contacted the ground.

"Major Bass had evidently ejected only shortly before impact, as his body was found less than 1/2 mile from the crash site. Its exact relative location could not be determined because he had been moved by Thai Nationals prior to the arrival of the investigating team." (AF Form 711 USAF Accident/ Incident Report 68-5-14-1, undated, signed by Col Felix A. Blanchard, Board President.)

The rescue report provided other details. "The 34th Tac Ftr Sq from Korat, Thailand alerted Det 2 that Hayfire 2 had bailed out approx 85 mi NW of Ubon + 97 mi NE Korat. Det 2 scrambled JG 71, an HH-53 from Ubon Air Base. Crown 2, an HC-130 was also dispatched for orbit position to bailout site. JG located the downed pilot and a PJ was deployed to recover the deceased pilot and returned him to Korat Air Base. 2 sorties flown for 2.2 hrs."

The helicopter pilot was Maj K. V. Allison and his copilot was Capt W. R. Humphreys. The flight engineer was Sgt G. R. Xoles, and the PJs were Sgt Larry E. Palmer and Sgt D. C. Jomson. (Hand-written Open/Closing Rescue Mission Report 2-3-41 14 May 68, and 3 ARRGP OL-2 TWX 141400Z May 68, AFHRA Call # K318.2411-5, IRIS #1017071.)

Maj Gene Cirillo knew Maj Bass from their F-105 RTU class at McConnell. "Sam was relatively speaking, 'one of those who should not have been there.' He was in his forties at the time and had been flying C-47's when they tapped him for F-105's. He was an extremely likable guy and we went thru RTU together. Sam went to Korat and I went to

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. F-105 History

Takhli."

Lt Col Jack Sherrill was the commander of the 44 TFS at Korat. "I was on the flight line when the crash parade went out to greet Hayfire 1's landing in 24. The entire outer panel of his left wing, about 6 feet, was folded up about 45 degrees, held only by the upper skin and remarkably, some intact hydraulic lines. Heaven only knows what his final approach airspeed was. As the aircraft slowed, the panel, still holding its jamming pod, fell back down to normal. Thomas did a great job of recovering the airplane.

"Going back to Sam, he was indeed one who should not have been there. He had finished UPT in about '54 or '55, and assigned to an F-84F outfit. Evidently he was involved in a minor accident or incident about some unlocked gear failure and charged with pilot error. At that time, due to a surplus of pilots, that was 'sawadee kop'. He went to AFIT, got an MS in EE from MIT, and was assigned to Hanscom. Got his flying time in C-47s and later, a lot of time in the EC-121 out of Otis. Am not sure, but I suspect he volunteered to get into Thuds when the time came around. He felt that he was not at fault for the F-84F finding and wanted to prove he was a fighter pilot. He wasn't.

"Four of us, Sam, George Wensch, Bill Brown, and myself, batched in the McConnell BOQ thru RTU. Knowing the return rate of Thud drivers, 3 out of 4, we always raised a macabre toast at supper to "whichever of you SOB's isn't coming back." Sam was not particularly enthusiastic in the toast. While 3 of us would proceed to the bar, Sam went back to the books. On at least one occasion, when we later worked our way down the hall, Sam would ask us to come in and go over in detail, everything that lead had to do to go to Smoky Hill; check in, radio calls, airspeed,.... The works. There was no way he would admit it and back out, and we had some sort of ill advised honor or respect that kept us from discouraging him or reporting his deficiencies. ..."

"It wasn't too hard to figure out what happened. Sam got separated in some thick Cu, returned in the clear, got chewed on a bit. Got separated again, attempted blind rejoin, too much closing rate, tried to duck under and join on left wing. Contacted left ECM pod with windshield. We were able to deduce this from the fact that Sam's plane had two bright red MiG stars which showed up on Thomas' pod." The stars were for the two MiGs shot down by 1Lt David B. Waldrop (44 TFS, 388 TFW) on 23 Aug 1967.

"Injuries, and the remainder of the seat, recovered from a junkyard in Roi Et, made it pretty clear that he ejected with the windscreen bow about even with the stick.

"Sometimes there's more to stories than the accident report reveals. Incidentally, I've heard somewhere that there were no 'accidents' during this time in Korat. I know there was a complete formal report submitted to Wing CC on this. I prepared and signed it and Doc Blanchard signed it as Board President." (Jack Sherrill, e-mail, 18 Oct 2004.)

Maj Bass was born 20 April 1928. He entered the service from Springfield, New Jersey. His name appears on the Vietnam War Memorial Wall panel 60E line 8.

388 TFW History, Apr - Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frames 0773 - 0776 and 1444 - 1447 & Eugene Cirillo, e-mail, 26 Feb 00.

27-May-68

30-May-68

4077

Between 27 - 30 May 1968, three F-105 pilots from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, visited forward air controller units in the I Corps area of South Vietnam for cross training to improve F-105 close air support to FACs in South Vietnam. The pilots were Maj Ivor K. Goodrich, who visited the "Helix" FACs supporting the 23rd Infantry "Americal" Division; Capt Anthony F. Germann, who visited the "Rash " FACs of the 20 TASS supporting the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile); and Capt William A. Thomas, Jr., whose trip report didn't identify the unit he visited.

In his report, Maj Goodrich wrote, "The mission in I Corps, South Vietnam, generally falls into the area of close air support. In many cases, we could be expected to provide support to U.S. troops in contact with the enemy. Such close air support is presently provided by the A-1E, F-100, A-4 and F-4, and now the F-105 is expected to provide similar

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

F-105 History

support. There are several reasons why the F-105 has trouble matching the close air support provided by these other aircraft. The following comments relate to problem areas brought to my attention during the visit with the 'HELIX' FACs of the Americal Division.

"a. First, we don't carry high drag weapons. Thus we can't make low angle, low altitude deliveries.

"b. Another problem concerns the high angle dive bombing techniques used by the F-105 pilots. This technique involves a high altitude roll-in to achieve a 45-degree dive angle, which necessitates about a 6,000 foot minimum bomb release altitude. The biggest difficulty in regard to these type tactics is that the FAC has difficulty acquiring the fighters visually until bomb release or after. Keep in mind that the FACs are accustomed to working A-4s and F-100s delivering from a 30-degree dive to level at much lower altitudes.

"c. Closely related to the problem of dive angle and high altitude releases is the fuze arming time set on our bombs. The six second arming precludes release below 6,000 feet in a 45-degree dive or 4,000 feet in a 30-degree dive, assuming 500 KCAS at release. A lower arming time would provide more flexibility in our tactics.

"d. In addition, frequently the exact position of the enemy is not known to the FAC and he likes to employ a 'probing' technique. Specifically he wants the fighters to make multiple passes dropping one or two bombs at a time in slightly different locations according to his directions. Our inability to drop in pairs off the center line MER tends to inhibit the 'probing' technique. Related to this is the problem encountered when the number 2 man rolls in with or slightly behind the lead. When this happens, the FAC is unable to correct two's bombs off lead's impacts.

"e. In 90% of the cases where slick bombs are required, .025 second fuzing is most appropriate. This is because the targets are usually bunkers or trench complexes that are best destroyed by bombs that penetrate the surface. Instantaneous or .01 fuzing is not effective in most cases. The FACs feel we should use .025 fuzing for our work in South Vietnam.

"f. In cases where friendly troops are in close contact and requiring air support, accuracy becomes extremely important. Coupled with this is the requirement for deliveries to be made as a specific run-in heading, which will tend to insure safety of the friendly forces. It is here that the FACs get a little nervous with our high altitude releases and steep dive angles. He likes to be able to see that the fighter is in fact on the right attack heading and to insure himself that the drop will be clear of the friendly troops. As noted previously, visual acquisition of the fighters is not easy in the case of F-105s and a 150 meter impact error may be too much. In this regard, the FACs like to give corrections in terms of clock positions using the run in heading as 12 o'clock. This is opposed to the North/South, East/West method reportedly preferred by some F-105 pilots.

"g. Last but not least, is the maneuvering capability of the F-105, plus the fuel reserves needed to get back to the refueling track.

"h. Other areas of interest concerned the fact that the FACs I worked with do not get the 'base' altitude or time. 'base' plus a stated altitude meant nothing to them. In addition, most FACs did not realize that we have the M-61 cannon and therefore were not aware of our strafing capability. It was noted that we seldom report the availability of our 20-mm munition when reporting ordnance to the FAC."

Maj Goodrich concluded his report by stating, "In spite of our alleged shortcomings, [the FACs] could not remember putting in a bad set of F-105s."

Capt Germann's report included similar points and added several additional ones. "Don't drop rocket pods in SVN because the VC use them against the friendly forces. ... The CBU type ordnance is not used in the 1st Air Cav area. This is because the VC use the unexploded munitions to make their own booby traps and mines. ... A large number of targets assigned to the F-105 by the 1st Air Cav Division is to make landing sites for airborne assault operations. With

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

F-105 History

small hilltops it is absolutely necessary to hit the target. With our present type loads consisting of the 6 X 750 and the 2 X 7,000 [3,000?] these make excellent targets for the F-105."

Capt Thomas' report, while covering many of the same points, added still other comments. "The first recommendation that FAC's had was that we continue to put forth most of our efforts in Pack 1. They are concerned with the increase in supplies and activities in the South since this bomb pause. On the other hand they would like to work with us. At present, our ordnance and tactics are not compatible with their needs. ..."

388 TFW history, Apr - Jun 68, Vol II, USAF microfilm NO584, frames 1256 - 1262.

14-Jun-68

3974

F-105 pilots from the 388 TFW "destroyed an estimated 350 barrels of POL in a storage area north of Mu Gia Pass."

"Four flights of F-105s, a total of ten aircraft (seven 'Ds' and three 'Fs') struck the target located north of Mu Gia Pass." The four flights and the order in which they attacked were "Locust", "Waco", "Kaiser", and "Hayfire". Each of the flights struck other targets before checking in with the F-100F Fast FAC, "Misty 51", who controlled the strikes against the POL storage area.

"One flight of two F-105s (Hayfire) dropped four MK-82 (500-lb.) bombs while the other three flights strafed the area with 20-mm cannon fire. They destroyed at least 350 barrels of POL.

"Flying in the second flight to strike the target ["Waco"], Capt John E. Hartman, 34 TFS, said, 'Maj Goodrich (Maj Ivor K. 34th) made the first strafing pass, blowing up close to 50 barrels.'

"Goodrich and Hartman made several more passes on the area. Hartman continued, 'We got three explosions which turned into sustained fires, plus three additional sustained fires.'

"The FAC gave Goodrich and Hartman credit for approximately 200 barrels of POL destroyed. As they left the target area, the two pilots saw smoke rising 2,000 feet over the area.

"Another 34th pilot, Capt William A. Thomas, Jr., was in a succeeding flight ["Kaiser" or "Hayfire"]. 'When we got into the area,' Thomas related, 'the flight ahead of us already had the area burning. Major Matthews (Maj Richard D. 34th) and I made several passes.'

"On his first pass, Thomas caused two large secondary explosions. Making one last strafing pass, Thomas and Matthews accounted for two additional large secondary explosions and sustained fires. 'The FAC credited us with destroying about 50 drums,' Thomas said. 'By the time we left the area, smoke was really billowing.'

"Captains Ben J. Fuhrman and Lawrence L. Bogemann, both 34th, also took part in the attack. Fuhrman made four strafing passes, accounting for 50 barrels of POL, three secondary explosions and a sustained fire."

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Bobbin 1" attacking a bulldozer in RP-1. "Possibly damaged bulldozer." It was his 85th combat mission.

388 TFW history, Apr - Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frames 0730 - 0731 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.

20-Jun-68

4103

After starting on 13 May 1968, the first singles handball tournament at Korat concluded with F-105 pilot Capt William A. Thomas, Jr., from the 34 TFS, the winner.

388 TFW history, Apr - Jun 68, Vol I, USAF microfilm NO584, frame 1371.

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. F-105 History

22-Jun-68

3977

F-105 pilots from the 388 TFW "struck and destroyed a huge POL and munitions storage area near Mu Gia Pass, causing numerous secondary explosions. A total of 26 aircraft in 11 flights bombed and strafed the target area during the attacks, which lasted most of the day." Today's target was located near the coordinates 17-38N and 106-06E. The action was similar to, but much larger than, the attacks on 14 June 1968 against a POL and munitions storage area, at coordinates 18-02N and 105-50E, led by a FAC with call sign "Misty 51".

"Again, working with an F-100 FAC, 11 flights totaling 26 F-105s (19 'Ds' and seven 'Fs') bombed and strafed the area. A total of 32 M-117 (750-lb.) bombs, one MK-82 (500-lb.) bomb, four CBU 24s and an untold number of 20-mm cannon shells were expended." The 11 flights and the order in which they attacked the target were: "Gator", "Cactus", "Ozark", "Simmer", "Pancho", "Crossbow", "Scuba", "Master", "Kaiser", "Waco", and "Detroit". Eight of the flights struck other targets before checking in with "Misty 51" for clearance to strike the storage area.

"One of the participating pilots was Capt Nobe R. Koontz, Jr., 469 TFS. He was in the second flight, "Cactus", consisting of one "F" and two "Ds"] to hit the area. He said, 'When we got there, about three small fires were already burning. The FAC didn't have to mark the target for us.'

"The storage area was off Route 101, about 350 meters in the woods and very difficult to spot", Koontz commented, "The FAC had put in the initial smoke rocket, but once the secondaries started, he just cleared the flights in.' Continuing he said, 'We rolled in and made three strafing passes, resulting in a large secondary explosion with smoke and debris going about 1,000 feet into the air. There were rockets, POL and quite a bit of ammunition going off. The FAC told us to hold off for a few minutes while the secondaries went off.'

"Koontz's flight made several more passes, with their M-61 cannons, getting approximately 15 secondary explosions.

"The captain said the large secondary cleared an area 500 to 800 feet in diameter, completely leveling the trees. 'Something in the center kept burning and more secondaries started going off around the edges,' the captain said. 'When the other flights started strafing, they made the area progressively larger, getting more secondaries around the outside. Just by strafing they probably got 100 secondaries. We know there were rockets stored there because while holding off, waiting for the secondaries to stop, the rockets were igniting and going airborne to about 1,000 feet.'

"A flight led by Maj Bryant Heston, 469 TFS, found out later that during the five to 10 minutes that elapsed between this flight's departure and the arrival of the next, the FAC noted at least 40 or 50 secondary ammunition explosions resulting from the heat generated in the area.

"Capt William A. Thomas, Jr., 34 TFS, was leader of a flight (Waco) which bombed the area. 'I rolled in and dropped my ordnance,' he said. 'My number two man (Maj Richard D. Matthews, 34th) told me, as I pulled off the target, that a large secondary explosion had resulted from my bombs.

"The rest of the flight put their ordnance right in the target area. There must have been at least seven or eight fires and a lot of small flashes -- probably caches of ammunition going off -- by the time we left the area."

388 TFW history, Apr - Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frames 0690 and 0734 - 0735 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.

03-Jul-68

2317

Capt Bill Harris, 469 TFS, 388 TFW, flew F-105D 61-0167 on his 99th combat mission from Korat RTAFB, Thailand. It was an armed reconnaissance mission in RP-1, North Vietnam. He was called by a FAC to knock out a SAM site. "SH bombs!" Sortie length was 2 hours.

The 34 TFS launched "Scuba" flight. The lineup was:

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

F-105 History

- #1 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 67th combat mission. He logged 2.35 flying time.
- #2 - 1Lt Ronald D. Stafford
- #3 - Lt Col Robert J. Klingensmith, Jr., the 34 TFS commander
- #4 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.

Bill Harris, letter 19 March 2001 & Joe Sechler, mission log via e-mail 28 Apr 2010.

22-Jul-68

6624

Capt William A. Thomas, Jr., from the 34 TFS, received the Air Medal (1st through 9th OLC) for "Meritorious Achievement While Participating in Aerial Flight" for the period 2 February - 22 July 1968. The award certificate was approved on 22 August 1968 and was signed by General George S. Brown, 7th Air Force commander, and Harold Brown, Secretary of the Air Force.

Air Medal Award Certificate and Hq 7th Air Force SO G-2601 dated 22 August 1968.

31-Jul-68

4153

During July 1968, three pilots from the 34 TFS completed 100 missions over North Vietnam. They were: Lt Col Kenneth M. Hiltz, Maj Melvin L. Irwin, and Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.

His 100th mission on 18 July 1968 was the last F-105 flight for Ken Hiltz. Since his first flight at McConnell on 1 June 1967, he had accumulated 359.1 flying hours in the airplane.

His 100th was also Maj Irwin's last F-105 flight. Since his first flight at McConnell in June 1967, he had accumulated 410.5 hours in the airplane.

Capt Thomas was next assigned to the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, at Kadena AB, Okinawa.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., who worked in the 388 TFW command post but was attached to the 34 TFS, flew his 100th mission on 19 July. He flew his first mission on 7 October 1967. By the time of his last flight, he had accumulated 475.3 hours in the F-105.

The 34 TFS commander was Lt Col Robert J. Klingensmith, Jr. and the Operations Officer was Maj Clarence E. Langford.

388 TFW History, Jul - Sep 68, USAF microfilm NO585, frame 0803 & 34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & F-105 Flying Hour Report, dated 18 Nov 1985 provided by USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.

31-Aug-68

4199

Ten pilots from the 34 TFS received medals approved by 7 AF in August 1968 for missions flown earlier. They were:

- Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen DFC (10 OLC) SO G-2685 29 Aug 1968 (14 Dec 67)
- Maj James E. James, Jr. DFC 5 (OLC) SO G-2627 24 Aug 1968 (14 Dec 67)
- Capt Arthur G. Duston AM SO G-2606 22 Aug 68, (6 Jul - 28 Jul 68)
- Capt Chester H. Thatcher, Jr. AM SO G-2606 22 Aug 68 (28 Jun - 17 Jul 68)
- Lt Col Earl F. Bancroft AM (10 OLC) SO G-2607 22 Aug 68 (7 Jul - 28 Jul 68)
- Maj Vincent Colasuonno AM SO G-2607 22 Aug 68 (4 Jul - 23 Jul 68)
- 1Lt David S. Hartman, Jr. AM SO G-2605 22 Aug 68 (4 Jul - 21 Jul 68)
- 1Lt Ronald A. Hoffmeyer AM SO G-2605 22 Aug 68 (4 Jul - 21 Jul 68)
- Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr. AM (19 - 27 OLC) SO G2603 22 Aug 68 (7 Nov 67 - 19 Jul 68)
- Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. AM (1 - 9 OLC) SO G-2601 22 Aug 68 (2 Feb - 29 May 68)

Capt Thomas departed Korat on 31 August 1968 for his next duty assignment with the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, Kadena AB,

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

F-105 History

Okinawa, where he arrived on 1 September. He was joined in Okinawa by his wife, Mary Jane, and a son and daughter.
388 TFW history, Oct - Dec 68, USAF microfilm NO585, frame 1765 & Capt Bill Thomas, AF Form 11.

15-Jan-69

2610

(Approximate date) "Twenty-eight Thunderchief Pilots Cited -- For completing 100 missions or combat tours in the F-105 fighter-bomber, twenty-eight pilots received special recognition certificates this month at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, from the Republic Aviation Division.

"The recipients were: Col Monroe S. Sams; Lt Col Dwight E. Mason; Maj Edward Y. Cleveland, Eddie V. Deck, Edgar W. Michie, Jr., Gerald C. Gustafson, Frank D. Schultz, Jr., Charles E. Bishop and Roger P. Scheer; Capts Thomas H. Edge, Lawrence G. Hoppe, Kenneth W. Mathews, Frank E. Peck, Rodney A. Skoglund, William A. Thomas, Jr., Forrest S. Winebarger, J. Leon Garner, Edwin L. Harvey, Dennis Jarvi, Bruce L. Melton, William D. Scott, Anthony C. Shine, Gordon L. Clouser, Robert W. Ferrel, Joseph W. Ralston, James Benton West, Harry E. Murk, and Thomas Coady."

Several of these pilots had been assigned to the 34 TFS and the 469 TFS when they flew their 100th mission.

Thunderchief Worldwide Report, Vol. IV, No. 5, February 1969.

01-Apr-69

6634

"At the beginning of April, the 12 TFS, [18 TFW,] was rated C-4 with only 17 crews counted for C status."

"In early April, the squadron was assigned seventeen F-105D and seven F-105F Wild Weasel aircraft." The 12 TFS was the only squadron at Kadena still flying F-105s.

"In April, The Wild Weasel alert requirement at the FOL was manned by two TDY crews from SEA. ..." The squadron's Forward Operating Location was Kwang-ju AB, Korea. The alert commitment was under "Combat Fox", which resulted from the capture by the North Koreans of the USS Pueblo 15 months earlier, on 23 January 1968.

The roster of officers assigned to the 12 TFS at Kadena on 1 April 1969 included:

Lt Col Dwight E. Mason - Commander
Maj Charles E. Bishop - Operations Officer
Maj Howard K. White - Asst Ops Officer
Maj Eddie V. Deck - Asst Ops Officer
Maj Rodney A. Skoglund - Scheduling Officer
Capt Joseph W. Ralston - Stan/Eval
Capt John W. McCarey - Maintenance Officer
1Lt Joseph T. Rinella - Munitions Maintenance
2Lt Charles O. Hanson - Flight Line Maintenance
2Lt David C. Dixon - Flight Line Maintenance
2Lt Deane C. Drury - Intelligence Officer

Attached Wing Staff Officers

Col Monroe S. Sams - 18 TFW Wing Commander
Col Kenneth B. Glover - 18 TFW DCO
Capt William R. Jolly
Maj Leon D. Nedbalek - Flying Safety (1 Apr - 12 Jun 69)
Maj Roger P. Scheer - Chief, Stan/Eval (1 Apr - 9 Jun 1969)
Capt Edwin L. Harvey
Maj Edgar W. Michie, Jr. - Emerg Actions Off & Alert Pad Cmdr (1 Apr - 30 Jun 69)
Capt Harry E. Murk

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Maj Benjamin Dailey
Capt William J. Binkley - Flight Surgeon

India Flight
Capt John P. Schoeppner
Capt Frank E. Peck
Capt James B. West
Capt Gordon L. Clouser

Juliet Flight
Capt Thomas J. Coady
Capt Carl D. Eliason
Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
Capt Forrest S. Winebarger
Capt Henry L. Sherard
Capt William A. Stout, Jr.

Lima Flight
Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe
Capt Thomas H. Edge
Capt Bernard F. Ellrodt
Capt Jeffrey G. Cliver
Capt Joe T. Short

Kilo Flight (Wild Weasels)
Maj Donald R. Yates - Pilot (WW # 106)
Capt Tracy P. Rumsey - EWO (WW # 317)
Capt Harold W. Stoll - EWO (WW # 137)
Capt George C. Connolly - Pilot (WW # 450)
Capt Kemper J. Gleason - EWO (WW # 421)
Capt Jeffrey K. Pepperell - EWO (WW # 428)

History of the 18 TFW 1 Apr - 30 June 1969, AFHRA Call # K-WG-18-HI, IRIS # 448509, Appendix III Exhibit 2, pp 4, 9 and 23.

30-Jun-69

6635

The 12 TFS, 18 TFW, Kadena AB, Okinawa, had "... 22 crews by the end of June for a C-3 rating."

"... Four strike pilots departed PCS and seven F-105D/F combat veterans reported for duty this quarter [1 Apr - 30 Jun 69]. The squadron also acquired four recent graduates of the F-105 school at McConnell AFB, Kansas, and four EWOs with recent combat experience in the F-105F Wild Weasel missions. All aircrews in the 12 TFS became highly qualified to perform the squadron's assigned tasks through the upgrading and continuation training program. ... Since eighty-five percent of the aircrews assigned were combat veterans, the experience level in the 12th remained high. The squadron boasts a collective total of 3140 combat missions in SEA, 2310 of which were flown over North Vietnam."

"The 12 TFS flew 1095 sorties for a total of 1728.0 hours during the quarter. Of this total, 515 sorties for 826.6 hours were flown at [the FOL at] Kwang-ju AB, Korea." By the end of June, "... those Weasels assigned to the 12th TFS began to cover the FOL alert."

"... Higher headquarters placed much emphasis on the Wild Weasel program. For a time, the 18 TFW possessed the only Wild Weasels in PACAF forces outside of SEA. A viable Wild Weasel program was generated that would provide realistic training including tracking simulated SA-2 sites and receiving the corresponding RHAW signals from

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. F-105 History

these sites. Consequently, Wild Weasel tactics were practiced against Nike missile sites in Korea, and for the first time, in Okinawa."

The squadron history described a transportation problem in supporting their operations at Kwang-ju. "During the entire quarter, aircrews traveled to and from the FOL for normal rotation. The primary means of transportation was a MAC contract courier B-727, which made stops at Kwang-ju, Osan, Itazuke, Yokota, and Kadena. The direct flights between Kadena and Kwang-ju were not on a regular schedule and often a replaced crew could not leave the FOL until the second day after being replaced. This overlap of aircrews at the FOL was responsible for a marked decrease in the efficiency of the operation on the order of eighteen to twenty-one man-days each month. The courier schedule was unsatisfactory in that a back log of people and freight caused by bad weather could not be resolved without gross deviations from the published schedule. The 727 is not able to carry aircraft engines. The result was a significant lack of support by MAC contract scheduling, which cost the squadron many training hours for maintenance and aircrews."

By the end of the quarter, the 12 TFS, "... had 23 F-105Ds and 7 F-105F Wild Weasel aircraft. ... There were no F-105s on nuclear alert status this quarter."

The roster of officers assigned to the 12 TFS at Kadena on 30 June 1969 included:

Lt Col Dwight E. Mason - Commander
Maj Charles E. Bishop - Operations Officer
Maj Howard K. White - Asst Ops Officer
Maj Eddie V. Deck - Asst Ops Officer
Maj Ralph M. Sires - Scheduling Officer
Capt Joseph W. Ralston - Stan/Eval
Capt Tracy P. Rumsey - Admin
Capt John W. McCarey - Maintenance Officer
1Lt Charles O. Hanson - Flight Line Maintenance
2Lt David C. Dixon - Flight Line Maintenance
Capt Deane C. Drury - Intelligence Officer

Attached Wing Staff Officers

Col Monroe S. Sams - 18 TFW Wing Commander
Col Kenneth B. Glover - 18 TFW DCO
Maj Edgar W. Michie, Jr. - Emerg Actions Off & Alert Pad Cmdr (1 Apr - 30 Jun 69)
Capt William R. Jolly
Capt Anthony C. Shine - Flying Safety (13 Jun - 30 Jun 69)
Capt Edwin L Harvey
Capt Harry E. Murk
Maj Benjamin Dailey
Capt William J. Binkley - Flight Surgeon

India Flight

Capt John P. Schoeppner
Capt Frank E. Peck
Capt James B. West
1Lt William E. Kennedy III
1Lt Raymond P. Huot
1Lt Peter J. Linsley

Juliet Flight

Capt Thomas J. Coady

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

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Capt Carl D. Eliason
Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
Capt Forrest S. Winebarger
Capt Henry L. Sherard
Capt Charles A. Olivia
1Lt Curtis S. Hamme

Lima Flight
Capt Thomas H. Edge
Capt Bernard F. Ellrodt
Capt Jeffrey G. Cliver
Capt Joe T. Short
Capt James F. Leggett
1Lt William G. Mann

Kilo Flight (Wild Weasels)
Capt Robert P. White - Pilot (WW # 455)
Capt George C. Connolly - Pilot (WW #450)
Capt James A. Caldwell - Pilot (WW # 456)
Capt William A. Stout, Jr. - Pilot (WW # 460)
Maj Lorne F. McCormick - EWO (WW # 467)
Capt Harold W. "Pappy" Stoll - EWO (WW # 137)
Capt Kemper J. Gleason - EWO (WW # 421)
Capt Jeffrey K. Pepperell - EWO (WW # 428)
Capt Ralph M. Reed - EWO (WW # 485)
Capt Steven G. Meyerson - EWO (WW # 454)
Capt Robert W. "Butch" King - EWO (WW # 484)

History of the 18 TFW 1 Apr - 30 June 1969, AFHRA Call # K-WG-18-HI, IRIS # 448509, Appendix III Exhibit 2, Appendix IV, Exhibit 3, pp ii, 4, 9, 11, 13, 14, 19, and 24.

15-Mar-70

6630

(Approximate date) The six crews in Wild Weasel Class 71-CWW graduated from the 66 FWS, 4520 CCTW, Nellis AFB, NV.

Except for one pilot, the "... class [was] made up of troops who were activating the 561 TFS as a Wild Weasel Squadron at McConnell. ... It was a short class in that we were only checking out in the Standard ARM and the APR 35, 36, and 37. All the troops in the 561st had a complete tour in SEA as Weasels. That was a requirement to be assigned to the Squadron..." (Norm Frith, e-mail 15 Aug 2010)

The 561 TFS started converting to a Wild Weasel squadron at McConnell on 1 April 1970 from its F-105 RTU mission, which it had had since January 1966.

All but three of the men had completed an earlier Wild Weasel class where they had received Wild Weasel numbers. The class roster, the pilot-EWO crews, and their earlier Wild Weasel classes were:

Lt Col Donald L. "Buns" Fraizer (WW # 114) Class 65WW 1-2
EWO Capt George L. Shamblee (WW # 348) Class 67WW III-11

Maj Benjamin R. Fuller (WW # 129) Class 67WW III-7
EWO Maj Norman L. Frith (WW # 128) Class 67WW III-7

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Maj William H. Talley (WW # 554) Class 68WW III-25
EWO Capt William E. Freeman (WW # 403) Class 68WW III-16

Maj Edwin C. Johnson (WW # 604) Class 69-DWW
EWO Maj Eddie M. Adcock (WW # 100). No previous class

Capt Joe T. Short (WW # 919) No previous class
EWO Capt Joseph P. "Jay" Burchfield III (WW # 698) Class 69-HWW

Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. (WW # 907). No previous class.
EWO Capt Victor M. Ripley (WW # 561) Class 69-HWW

Maj Adcock had been assigned to the failed F-4C Wild Weasel program at Ubon. When the program was cancelled, he flew 100 missions from Takhli in 1966 as an EB-66 EWO. (First In ...)

Capt Thomas was from the 12 TFS at Kadena and had flown 104 F-105D missions with the 34 TFS from Korat in 1968. He was the only class member who was not assigned to the 561 TFS. He returned to Kadena and flew additional combat missions while TDY to Korat as a Wild Weasel pilot.

Wild Weasel Class rosters & Wild Weasel Classes database & "First In Last Out. Stories by the Wild Weasels." by Ed Rock, pg 531 & Bill Thomas, AF Form 11.

23-Mar-70

6642

As a 12 TFS Stan Eval Flight Examiner, Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. gave a check flight to Capt Clayton Bane Lyle at Kadena AB, Okinawa. It was the first of two TAC checks that Capt Thomas gave to Capt Lyle during their tours at Kadena.

Bane Lyle, e-mail 20 Aug 2010.

17-Apr-70

6631

In the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. requested a one-year voluntary extension of his overseas tour at Kadena AB, Okinawa. He had been assigned to the 12 TFS since 1 September 1968.

Capt Thomas' original reassignment date was 1 March 1971 and he requested it be extended to 1 March 1972. Part of his justification included the fact that he had flown 114 combat missions in SEA.

The 12 TFS Squadron Commander, Lt Col Dwight E. Mason, indorsed the request to the Wing Deputy Commander For Operations. "I concur. Captain Thomas is an experienced F-105 pilot who has recently been trained in the Wild Weasel role. He is a Standardization Evaluator as well. A large turnover of personnel is programmed during this extension period for the 12 TFS. Extending the oversea tour of Capt Thomas will retain a valuable person to assist in a smooth transition of these programmed personnel. This extension would be in the best interests of the Air Force."

The extension request was approved.

Capt Thomas letter dated 17 April 1970.

01-Jan-71

6633

Between 30 November 1970 and 1 January 1971, Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. from the 12 TFS, Kadena AB, Okinawa, flew 76.8 combat hours (approximately 19 missions) in F-105Gs. During this period, Capt Thomas was on TDY as a Wild Weasel pilot with the 6010 WWS at Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

Capt Bill Thomas, AF Form 11.

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. F-105 History

26-Feb-71

01-Mar-71

6641

Capt Clayton B. Lyle III and Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. from the 12 TFS flew cross country from Kadena AB, Okinawa to Clark AB, Phillipines. "... Due to our low flying time for the year, we ... were given 2 aircraft with 3 bags of gas and told to go XC and build flying time. We flew to Clark and then flew local there from 26 Feb - 1 Mar 71."

Bane Lyle, e-mail 17 Aug 2010.

14-May-71

6628

Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. from the 12 TFS became the 18 TFW Standardization/Evaluation Flight Examiner.

AF Form 11 of Capt Thomas

28-Oct-71

29-Oct-71

6637

"The 18 Tactical Fighter Wing outgunned tactical fighter teams from five other USAF and Republic of Korea Air Force wings at the recent Fifth Air Force weapons meet at Koon-ni Range, ROK.

"The 18 TFW was represented in the twelve-team meet by an F-105 Thunderchief team from the wing's 12 TFS and a team of F-4C Phantom II aircrews and aircraft from the wing's 44 TFS and 67 TFS.

"Based on total point score, the wing's F-105 team placed first and the 18th's F-4C team took second place in the two-day weapons delivery competition, chalking up 2792 and 2586 points, respectively.

"During the international competition, Oct 28, the Thunderchief team from Kadena out-pointed other USAF and ROKAF competitors in low-angle bombing, dive bombing and low-angle strafing to win the International Team Trophy.

"Other USAF units competing in the international portion of the meet included F-4 aircrews and aircraft from the 3 TFW, Kunsan, AB, ROK, and the 405 TFW, Clark AB, P.I. The ROKAF tactical fighter teams included F-86, F-4 and F-5 aircrews and planes from the 1st, 10th, and 11th Fighter Wings in the Republic of Korea.

"On the second day of the meet, only the USAF teams competed. In the four additional bombing events held Oct 29, the 18 TFW teams outscored their competitors from the 3rd and 405th TFWs.

"The 12th TFS team or individual pilots from the F-105 unit won or tied for 11 of the 17 awards presented. The four Thunderchief crews from Kadena combined their overall point scores to win the permanent and perpetual international team trophies and the permanent and perpetual 5 AF team trophies.

"Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. of the 12 TFS won both the Top Gun International and Top Gun 5 AF plaques for individual achievement. He also tied with a 3rd TFW F-4D crew for Top Gun in the radar low-angle drogue delivery event, scoring within 50 feet of the target.

"The Kadena-based F-105 team, led by Lt Col Kenneth C. Schow, squadron commander, also included Maj Chuck Stone and Captains Bob Venkus and Bane Lyle.

"Maj Stone and an 18th TFW F-4C crew, Maj Larry Jacob and Capt Ray Penley of the 57 TFS, were awarded Top Gun Visual Laydown certificates in a four-way tie that included two F-4D crews from the 3rd TFW. Each scored bullseyes.

"... Both the F-105 and the F-4C teams from the 18 TFW flew each range mission from Taegu AB, ROK. The meet, a test of weapon delivery capabilities of 5 AF tactical fighters, was expanded from last year to include more types of aircraft as well as ROKAF teams.

"Col Robert F. Titus, 18 TFW commander, attributed the success of the two teams to 'a positive attitude within the wing and the skill of a group of professionals who have a desire to win.'

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

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"Of course, I speak of the wing with great pride and I believe the self-sustaining interplay between the aircrews and the ground crews kept us on top during the entire meet.," concluded the colonel.

"... Typical of the high maintenance standards achieved by the wing was one F-105 aircraft that flew 23 consecutive flights without a maintenance malfunction. ..."

Kadena AB newspaper, 10 Nov 71, pp 1 - 2.

24-Nov-71

6627

Two F-105 pilots and one EWO from Kadena AB, Okinawa, were ordered on TDY to Nellis AFB to attend Wild Weasel training and return to Kadena. The orders were signed by Col Hershel E. Galyon, 18 TFW/DO. "Officers must be in place NLT 2 Dec 71."

The men were:

Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. - 18 TFW
Capt Clayton B. Lyle III - 12 TFS
Capt James E. Weaver (EWO) - 12 TFS

Capt Thomas was the wing Stan/Eval Flight Examiner but flew with the 12 TFS.

All three men attended Wild Weasel Class 72-FWW.

"Request and Authorizat on for Temporary Duty - Military", AF Form 626, 824 CSGp SO TD-2973 dated 24 November 1971 & Nellis Wild Weasel class rosters.

15-Dec-71

6640

(Approximate date) In the 4520 CCTW, Nellis AFB, NV, Wild Weasel class 72-FWW graduated four pilots and two EWOs. It was a two-week refresher class for experienced Wild Weasel crew members. They were assigned to the 66 FWS and trained in the F-105G. Their flying began on 6 December. The graduates were:

Pilots

Maj Monte D. Lillard (WW # 316)
Maj Porter Thompson (WW # 342)
Capt Clayton B. Lyle III (WW # 948)
Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. (WW # 907)

EWOs

Lt Col William M. Milstead (WW # 149)
Capt James E. Weaver (WW # 962)

Captains Thomas, Lyle, and Weaver were all from the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, Kadena. During the class, Capt Lyle flew 14 training sorties between 6 and 15 December 1972. All three men returned to Kadena after their refresher training.

Wild Weasel class roster and database & Bane Lyle, e-mail 17 Aug 2010.

10-Feb-72

11-Feb-72

6643

Three Wild Weasel pilots and an EWO from the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, were sent on TDY from Kadena to support the 17 WWS at Korat RTAFB, Thailand. The pilots were Capt Clayton Bane Lyle, Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. and Capt Carl L. Womack. Capt W. J. "Sonny" Lane, Jr. was the EWO.

Bane Lyle recalled the circumstances of this combat trip. "It was just before the Easter invasion. The 17 WWS was really strapped for crews, pilots especially; some had flown up to 125 hours the previous month and none had had a day

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. F-105 History

off in 4 weeks. It was a last minute decision to send us. Our Ops Officer came back from wing standup. I was sitting in the snack bar and he said I was going to Korat on the 10:30 scheduled 737. It was 09:50! As I headed out of the building to go home and pack, the duty officer was calling Carl Womack to taxi back from the arming area and that he had another tasking. All three of us, Bill, Carl, and myself showed up at Base Ops with some unhappy wives. When we got to Bangkok, we had missed the Klong (C-130 courier) to Korat. The squadron had us on the schedule for the 10th but we were too late to process in and fly."

The crews flew their first combat mission with the 17 WWS the next day. Bane Lyle recalled, "My first flight on the 11th was with Carl Womack. My Bear was Sonny Lane. It was a day mission in support of an RF-4C who we were to meet on the tanker and recce RP-1 and -2. The Recce was waiting for us at the west end of the SVN DMZ. He had a Wolf FAC and 12 F-4s with him. We joined on the gaggle and started up the Laos NVN border to Ban Kari Pass and just as we crossed the border into NVN, the Wolf FAC rolled in and marked and said there is a huge truck park, you can't miss them. The 12 F4s rolled in, we stayed with the recce into NVN and escorted him up to Vinh and back down the coast to the DMZ. The reason I remembered it was because it was my only day flight that trip."

During this combat tour, Capt Lyle flew 14 combat missions and 56.6 hours and returned to Kadena on 10 March 1972. "Carl and I were released early from the TDY due to some DEROS TDY requirement, which, if we stayed, we would have had our DEROS changed."

Capt Thomas remained at Korat until 1 April 1972.

Bane Lyle, e-mails 17 and 20 Aug 2010 & Bill Thomas, AF Form 11.

26-Feb-72

6644

As the 18 TFW Stan Eval Flight Examiner, Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. gave a check flight to Capt Clayton Bane Lyle at Korat RTAFB, Thailand. Both Wild Weasel pilots were from the 12 TFS on TDY to support the 17 WWS. For the check flight, Capt Lyle "... led a two-ship ARC Light (B-52) support mission."

Bane Lyle, e-mail 20 Aug 2010 & Bill Thomas, AF Form 11.

01-Apr-72

6632

Between 11 February and 1 April 1972, Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. from the 12 TFS, Kadena AB, Okinawa, flew "41 combat missions, 163.9 combat hours, F-105G aircraft, SEA, 39 out of country combat missions." During this period, he was on TDY as a Wild Weasel pilot with the 17 WWS at Korat.

He returned to Kadena on 1 April 1972.

Capt Bill Thomas, AF Form 11.

21-Apr-72

F-105D 624244 12 TFS 18 TFW Kadena AB Operational loss during test flight. Pilot flew into clouds, two booms were heard and debris fell from the plane. Crashed in the Pacific Ocean south of Ie Shima Island, Okinawa. 26-40N 127-46E Capt William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. 12 TFS pilot parachuted but died.

Capt Clayton Bane Lyle was a friend of Capt Thomas and was based at Kadena at the time of the crash. He described the circumstances of Thomas' flight. "We were scheduled to ferry the last 4 ship of F-105Ds in PACAF to the US. Our flight consisted of Col Bob Janke (18 TFW Vice), Maj Ed Cleveland, Bill and I. We were to deliver the aircraft to the 507 TAC Fighter Group at Tinker AFB, an Air Force Reserve unit converting to the F-105. Before we left, we had to do an acceptance flight, I believe within 7 days on each aircraft, to make sure it was in good condition for the long over-water flight. Bill's aircraft was the last to be ready for the test flight.

"The weather was a low, maybe 2000' overcast, throughout the area. It was clear below the clouds but windy and the ocean was very rough. The tops were not too high, I believe 5-6000', and Bill was flying above the undercast. As I remember, he flew over Ie Shima Range and the range personnel heard an explosion and shortly later, saw a parachute

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

F-105 History

come thru the clouds and land in the water. It looked like the pilot was being dragged along the top of the water, which was very rough. I heard the call from the range and we notified the Rescue unit (HH-43 "mix master"). Their alert aircraft was airborne and before it could be sent on the rescue mission, it had to return and refuel. I remember we weren't too happy with that. I went on the first search and we found part of the life raft and some of his survival equipment and that was all. I remember several other squadron pilots went on the chopper as the search continued.

"We left on the ferry flight a few days later with only 3 aircraft. The flight was long and hard, losing one of our flight members and with a lot of time thinking about what happened." (Bane Lyle, e-mail 17 August 2010.)

"Bill was doing a pullup for a nuke toss delivery heading South over the West shore (of Ie Shima). There was an overcast and the aircraft went into the clouds. The range officer said he heard an explosion, saw the debris fall out of the clouds, and saw Bill in a chute with his head down as though he was unconscious. The wind was high and his chute was dragged until it disappeared. The LBR helo at Kadena had been flying a local training flight and was being refueled, so took several minutes (some say 45) to reach the range. They couldn't find him." (Sonny Lane)

"... Bill was on the South end (of Ie Shima) where the water tends to be shallow. His helmet and life raft (were) recovered."

"I was in the 12th TFS with Bill Thomas but rotated back to McConnell AFB a short time before he went in. As I got the story, he finished what was to be the last Thud single ship mission on the Ie Shima range and then departed to RTB. However, he never arrived at Kadena and nobody had any definite idea about what had happened or just where he went in. (Curt James)

"Bill was good people and clearly slated for better things had he lived." (Robert W. King, e-mail to Weasel Net, 30 Aug 04.)

History of Flight

"1. Captain William A. Thomas, Jr., in F-105D, SN 62-4244, assigned to the 18th Tactical Fighter Wing, Kadena AB, Okinawa, was scheduled for a local flight on 21 April 1972 to check the aircraft prior to its overwater flight to CONUS, scheduled for 24 April 1972.

"2. The aircraft was configured with two 450 gallon drop tanks on inboard stations, all other stations were clean. Preflight, engine start, taxi, and takeoff were normal. At 1520I, approximately nine minutes after takeoff, the aircraft was observed over Ie Shima below the clouds, bases of which were reported as 2500 feet. Shortly thereafter, the aircraft was observed intermittently above the broken clouds, and at about 1525I, the aircraft was observed to crash in shallow water, approximately 1/4 NM offshore from Ie Shima Island.

"3. No radio transmissions were received from the pilot. Witnesses further reported hearing two closely spaced 'booms' and thereafter seeing the pilot descending under a fully deployed parachute canopy. The aircraft was destroyed, and significant parts of the wreckage were found. The pilot was not found."

This was the last F-105 lost in the 12 TFS. After transferring all its F-105s to units in the States, the squadron was deactivated on 16 May 1972.

Bill Thomas had flown 111 combat missions, 104 over North Vietnam, with the 34 TFS in 1968. He had flown an additional 60 combat missions as a Wild Weasel pilot assigned to the 12 TFS during TDYs to Korat between November 1970 and April 1972. (Bill Thomas, AF Form 11)

His name appears on the Vietnam War Memorial at Panel 04W, Line 131.

Sonny Lane, former F-105 EWO, e-mail 9 June 1998 & Curt James, former F-105 pilot, e-mail 11 June 1998

William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr.

F-105 History

& AF Form 711 USAF Accident/ Incident Report 72-4-21-1 dated 10 Mar 1972, signed by Col Everest E. Riccioni, President Investigating Board.

24-Apr-72

6638

On Monday 24 April 1972, Kadena AB, Okinawa, held a memorial service for Capt William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. who died in the crash of his F-105 on Friday. He had been stationed at Kadena since 1 September 1968. The weekly base newspaper published his obituary.

"Capt William A. Thomas of the 12 TFS was killed Friday afternoon when the F-105D he was piloting on a local mission crashed west of Okinawa in the East China Sea.

"Details of the accident are being withheld pending investigation by an accident board.

"Captain Thomas was born in St. Augustine, Fla., Jan. 23, 1940. He attended The Citadel, Charleston, S.C., where he majored in mathematics and received his Air Force commission in 1962 through the ROTC.

"Following pilot training at Craig AFB, Captain Thomas served three years with the Strategic Air Command at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. As a lieutenant, he was selected as a B-52 aircraft commander, one of the youngest officers to ever achieve that status. In 1967, he was selected for training in the F-105 and assignment to Southeast Asia.

"During his PCS tour at Korat RTAFB, and subsequent TDY tours from Kadena, Captain Thomas flew more than 200 missions as an F-105G Wild Weasel pilot. For his courage and devotion to duty, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster, and the Air Medal with 16 oak leaf clusters.

"Upon completion of his tour at Korat in August 1968, Captain Thomas was assigned to the 12 TFS at Kadena AB. He was selected as the standardization evaluation flight examiner for the F-105 due to his extensive background and high degree of proficiency in that aircraft. As a member of the 12th Gunnery Team, he won the Top Gun International and Top Gun Fifth Air Force trophies as he paced the F-105 Thunderchief team to victory in an International Weapons Meet held last October in Korea.

"Off duty, Captain Thomas devoted his time to the youth of Kadena as head coach for the T'Bolts football team and as a Little League baseball coach. He was also an active and highly respected competitor in local paddleball and handball circles.

"He is survived by his widow, the former Mary Jane Neumann of St. Augustine, daughters Robin Michele, 6, Tracy Lynn, 4, Heather Pennee, 1, and a son, William A. Thomas, Jr., 3.

"A memorial service for Captain Thomas was held at Kadena's Chapel 1 Monday followed by a fly-by of 12th F-105s in honor of their fallen comrade."

Kadena base newspaper article provided by Bane Lyle via e-mail 17 Aug 10.