



MIG KILLERS FOUR

By B. R. JACKSON

The Douglas AD (A-1) Skyraider is now over 20 years old. During its more than two decades of service, the type has undertaken and performed many roles, from attack bomber to ambulance. It was never classified as a fighter, yet two AD's had the honor of being the first propeller aircraft to down a jet in the supersonic era.

Sunday, 20 June 1965, was like many another day aboard the aircraft carrier USS Midway (CVA-41) which was patrolling in the South China Sea off the coast of North Viet Nam. On the agenda for the day were a few RESCAPS (Rescue Cover Air Patrol) missions. One RESCAP mission had been requested by the Second Air Division, Saigon, and was to take four pilots into the interior of North Viet Nam. The four Attack Squadron Twenty-Five pilots were: LCDR E. A. Greathouse, LTjg J. S. Lynne, LT C. B. Johnson and LTjg W. C. Hartman.

In the early afternoon, the four boarded their A-1J Skyraiders and were launched into the air, proceeding then to their target area in a tight formation without fighter cover. About 50 miles northwest of Thanh Hoa the four A-1J's were jumped by two MIG-17 Communist fighters. The Skyraider pilots immediately jettisoned their external fuel tanks and bomb loads and dove their aircraft for the ground, leveling off at tree top level.

They quickly set up the defensive pattern known as the "Thach Weave." In this pattern the pilots paired up into elements of two with each pair weaving in and out of the other while keeping a tight formation along a base course. The maneuver enabled each pair to protect the others' tails, preventing the MIG's from getting an open shot at either set of planes. Additionally, the planes being at tree top level kept the MIG's from diving into firing range without the risk of crashing into the thick jungle.

After their opening bounce, the MIG's continued to press their attacks but without success. They were unable to line up a good attack angle from either the front or the rear due to the Thach Weave and the maneuverability of the A-1J's. Finally, after several futile attempts to gain an advantage, one of the MIG's broke off the attack and proceeded back toward its base. The other MIG, apparently not satisfied that the

slower propeller driven airplanes could withstand a jet's attack for long, remained to press his advantage.

This MIG dropped down to the same level as the Skyraiders and began working in for a good shot. Finally, he came in and lined up on the tails of the two planes flown by Greathouse and Lynne. They turned with the MIG following, and the MIG passed directly in front of the two planes flown by Johnson and Hartman. These two immediately opened fire with their twin 20 mm cannon and sent their shells broadside into the Communist fighter. It caught fire instantly, rolled over on its side and nosed down into a ridge 700 feet below.

When the Skyraiders returned to the Midway a wave of great excitement rushed through the ship. These four pilots had added another page to the history of both Naval Aviation and their squadron by downing a supersonic jet aircraft with their "outdated" prop planes.

Soon known as the "MIG Killers Four" they were called to Saigon the next day to meet with members of the press and retell their story. The Premiere of South Viet Nam, Air Vice Marshall Nguyen Cao Ky, personally made them members of the Vietnamese Air Force, gave each a set of Vietnamese wings and decorated them with the Air Force Gallantry Medal. This is the highest decoration that South Viet Nam can bestow on any person in the field of aviation.

On 23 June, in a ceremony on the flight deck of the USS Midway, Vice Admiral Blackburn, COMSEVENTHFLT, presented the Distinguished Service Cross to LCDR Greathouse and LTjg Lynne for their part in the action. LT Johnson and LTjg Hartman were decorated with the Silver Star and each was given credit for a "half-kill."

The aircraft taking part in this action were:

A/C 573	BuNo 137525	Hartman, LT, USN
A/C 577	BuNo 139768	Johnson, LT, USN
A/C 571	BuNo 135300	Lynne, LTjg, USN
A/C 579	BuNo 134609	Greathouse, LCDR, USN

Aircraft 573 was later lost at sea during air operations in the South China Sea. All other aircraft were returned to the U. S. for overhaul and repainting when the Squadron returned to the Naval Air Station, Lemoore, California.



LT C. B. Johnson's Douglas A-1J, aircraft number 577, carrying rockets, bomb and auxiliary fuel tank. (U. S. Navy)



LCDR E. A. Greathouse's A-1J as seen at base in Japan sometime after the meeting with the MIG's. (U. S. Navy)



From left, in June 1965, LTjg J. S. Lynne, LCDR Greathouse, LT Johnson and LTjg W. C. Hartman. (U. S. Navy)



Aircraft 577 photographed following its return to the U. S. at Lemoore Naval Air Station, California. (U. S. Navy)