

In August, 1964, a number of North Vietnamese gunboats attacked the U.S. Navy destroyers USS Maddox and USS Turner Joy in the Gulf of Tonkin creating the now famous "Gulf of Tonkin Incident". The result was the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" in which the U.S. Congress authorized President Lyndon Johnson to launch heavy air raids against North Vietnam and to begin the direct United States ground intervention in South Vietnam. Immediately USAF and U.S. Navy units in the Far East were mobilized and began flying air strikes in North Vietnam and close air support missions in South Vietnam. USAF tactical fighter units in the United States were also placed on alert and prepared to deploy to the Far East to join the PACAF squadrons already in action.

One of the Tactical Air Command units alerted was the 832nd Air Division based at Cannon AFB, New Mexico. The 832nd AD consisted of the 27th and 474th Tactical Fighter Wings, each with four squadrons of North American F-100D Super Sabres, and the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing at Holloman AFB, New Mexico, which at that time was the last regular USAF unit flying the Republic F-84F Thunderstreaks and was just beginning to transi-

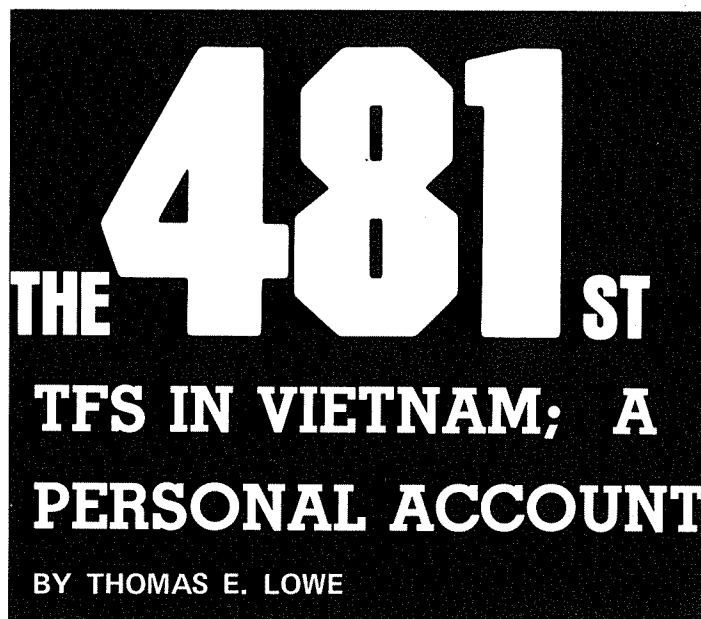


Lt. Col. Harold Comstock and unidentified crew chief pre-flight 750 lb. bomb prior to mission at Tan Son Nhut AB, South Vietnam, 1965.



tion to McDonnell F-4 Phantoms. One squadron of F-100s from each of the 27th and 474th TFWs were immediately deployed to South Vietnam where they participated in the early air strikes over both North and South Vietnam as well as Laos.

One of the 27th TFW squadrons that was placed on a secondary alert status and not immediately sent to Vietnam was the 481st Tactical Fighter Squadron, known as the "Crusaders." The 481st TFS was already in the final stages of preparation for a regularly scheduled TDY rotational assignment at Misawa AB, Japan, where it was to fulfill PACAF commitments in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. The 481st TFS completed this assignment and returned to Cannon AFB in December, 1964 and in the spring of 1965 was notified that it would deploy to South Vietnam in late June for a combat tour. By this time Tactical Air Command fighter squadrons were being rotated to South Vietnam on a regular TDY basis and normally flew a three to four month combat tour. North American F-100Ds had flown the bulk of the missions over North Vietnam during the initial months of the build-up, but as additional squadrons of more advanced fighters with greater performance and ordnance carrying capacity became available, notably the Republic F-105D and the McDonnell F-4, the F-100D was consigned to close air support missions within South Vietnam. It would not again fly over North Vietnam and Laos except for special mission assignments such as the "Misty FACs" and "Wild Weasel" units that hunted and destroyed SA-2 missile sites.



(Left) F-100D flown by Lt. Col. Harold Comstock turns toward a VC target 47 miles southwest of Saigon. F-100D is armed with LAU-3 rocket pods on the outboard pylons and 750 lb. bombs on the inboard pylons. USAF.

(Below) 1st Lt. Jimmy D. Kempton poses with his F-100D, A/C Tail No. 0-53622, "Lickity Split." Kempton was one of the two pilots who decorated all 481st TFS airplanes. 1st Lt. Tom Lowe.





481st TFS F-100D jettisons empty LAU-3 rocket pods after a strike against VC target in South Vietnam, 1965. 1st Lt. Jimmy Kempton.



481st TFS F-100D up on jacks in hangar at Tan Son Nhut AB undergoing periodic maintenance inspection. 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef.



(Below) Pilot's briefing being conducted by Major Robert "Pat" Barry, the joint Squadron Operation Officer. Captain Dale Hughes, (back to camera) Captain Norman Turner to his right, and Captain Joseph Reynes in chair at right of photo. 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef.

(Below) Major Robert Finley, joint Squadron Operation Officer, inspects hit in left wing of F-100D at Tan Son Nhut AB. 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef.



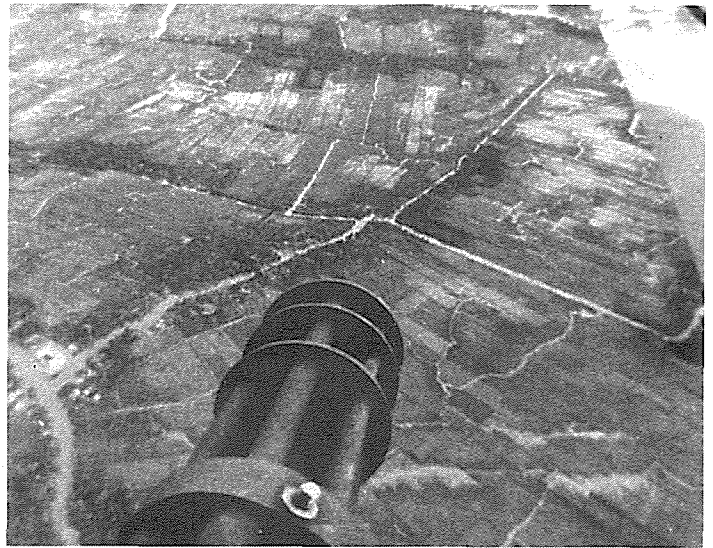


(Right) Captain Norman Turner (left) and Captain Alvord V. P. Anderson, III at Tan Son Nhut AB in 1965. Patch on left sleeve of Captain Turner's flight suit indicates he attended USAF Fighter Weapons School. 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef.

(Left) 481st TFS pilots in the gunnery section of squadron building at Tan Son Nhut AB. (L to R): Captain Dale Hughes, 1st Lt. Roderick Dorr, and 1st Lt. Edward Moon. 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef.

(Below) Vietnam's Mekong Delta, viewed from Air Force AC-47 Dragon Ship. The aircraft is equipped with flares and three Gatling guns on each side, each capable of spitting tracer ammunition at 100 rounds a second. They put a bullet into every square foot of area the size of football field in three seconds. USAF.

During the spring months of 1965 the 481st TFS "Crusaders" prepared for the late June deployment to South Vietnam. Mobility equipment was checked and packed, the aircraft that were to be assigned to the squadron were brought into fine tune by the ground crews, and finally, the many support personnel needed from Maintenance, Intelligence, Munitions, and Medical were selected. Suddenly, without any prior indication of any kind, the pre-planned movement was scrubbed and the squadron was alerted to deploy within twenty-four hours! On June 12, 1965, the 481st TFS deployed from Cannon AFB under the code name, "Operation Two Buck 16."¹ Eighteen North American F-100s, plus additional airborne spare aircraft, left Cannon AFB throughout the day and many Lockheed C-130s carried out the squadron's equipment and support personnel. The airborne spare F-100s accompanied the squadron until the first aerial refueling was successfully completed off the California coast and then they returned to Cannon AFB. The squadron continued across the Pacific to Hickam AFB, Hawaii, where the first RON for crew rest was scheduled.



For most of the pilots and the support personnel this was to be their first combat experience. Of the thirty pilots assigned to the 481st TFS, including several extras from the 522nd TFS and 524th TFS, only four had previous combat experience. The squadron commander, Lt. Colonel Harold E. Comstock, had flown 138 combat missions in Republic P-47s in Europe during WW II as a member of the 56th Fighter Group, the famed "Zemke Wolfpack." He was a fighter "ace", officially credited with destroying seven German aircraft, probably destroying one, damaging seven more, and shooting up thirty-two locomotives. Captain Stephen "Chad" Dvorchak had flown 530 missions in South Vietnam in the Fairchild C-123 and Captain Douglas Young had completed 648 missions as a forward air controller in Cessna O-1s. Captain Joseph Reynes was the fourth and eventually would become one of the most highly experienced and diversified Air Force combat pilots of the Vietnam war. He had already flown 558 missions as a FAC and as an U.S. advisor to a South Vietnamese Douglas A-1E squadron and would fly over 100 more missions in the F-100D with the 481st TFS. Several years later he would complete another combat tour over North Vietnam in the Republic F-105F as a "Wild Weasel" pilot.⁵

The 481st TFS pilots began flying close air support missions all over South Vietnam in both daylight and at night. Most of the missions were pre-planned and flown during the daytime, but many alert missions were also scrambled to meet emergency calls for tactical air strikes. The air operations were generally straight forward and the pilots found that their peacetime training was more than adequate. However, as in all previous combat operations, the orthodox often was thrown aside and the pilots were called upon to perform on the spot tactics and often were requir-

The following day the 481st TFS departed Hickam AFB in several flights of from four to six F-100s led by Boeing KC-135 tankers, which also provided the navigation for the fighters. The final enroute stop was at Clark AB, Philippines, where we discovered that the movement of the 481st TFS apparently was so secret that the base had not been notified of our impending arrival. When several flights of F-100s, KC-135s, and many C-130s began landing unexpectedly on June 14, 1965, Clark AB was thrown into somewhat of a dither.² Shortly after arriving at Clark AB, the 481st TFS was advised that it would remain there for several weeks because preparations for its employment in South Vietnam had not been completed. Consequently, the "Crusaders" doubled up with one of the permanently based F-100 squadrons in their operations building and quarters for the officers and men were acquired in anticipation of a stay at Clark AB.

During the first few days at Clark AB, several 481st TFS pilots and F-100Ds were sent on to South Vietnam as replacements for other F-100 units. Lt. Colonel Harold E. Comstock feared that his squadron was going to be split up and trickle away from him piecemeal before it got into combat, but fortunately the unexpected continued to follow the 481st TFS, for after only one week at Clark AB the squadron was ordered on to South Vietnam where all the pilots rejoined the unit. The "Crusaders" arrived at Tan Son Nhut AB, just outside of Saigon, June 21, 1965,³ after having completed nine aerial refuelings during its 9213nm flight from Cannon AFB.⁴ The squadron immediately began settling into their new quarters and after a quick familiarization with local procedures began flying combat missions on that very first day in South Vietnam. The 481st TFS was the first tactical jet fighter unit to operate from Tan Son Nhut AB and joined the Martin B-57s, McDonnell RF-101s, RVN A-1Es, and the myriad of other aircraft that operated from that extremely busy air base.



ed to complete missions for which they had not been trained. A good example of this was the night close air support missions. Back in the States for a pilot to qualify in night ordnance delivery, called "Night Owl" missions, he had to have a specified minimum amount of flying time in the F-100D and also at night. Consequently, some of the younger pilots were not qualified to fly the night missions. But in combat pilots perform whatever is required of them and 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef remembers his first night ordnance drop in South Vietnam as his most memorable combat mission. "We were hitting a road down in the Delta trying to keep a mass assault from over-running a Vietnamese fort. The C-130 dropping flares must have been on their first flight also, only about one-third of the flares lit and we were worried a bit about running into the duds floating down over the area. The CBU's had not yet arrived in Vietnam, which would have been great for that mission, so we were loaded with napalm. I didn't have enough flight time to be involved in the 'Night Owl' missions back at Cannon, so this was truly my first night flight. I was flying the number two position and came down the road in utter darkness and dropped my first two cans of napalm. My first shock was seeing the trees on both sides of the road all lit up by my drop — all above me! I figure I had made my drop at around five to ten feet! My next five passes were made with a minimum AGL altitude of 2000 feet. The FAC was really happy with my first pass, but didn't say much about the others."⁶

One of the most exciting and personally gratifying missions flown by the 481st TFS occurred during the night and early morning hours of July 19-20, only about one month after arriving in South Vietnam.⁷ Captain Norman Turner and 1st Lt. Donald Watson each had flown a mission earlier in the day and had been assigned to sit night alert. They had been resting in the alert trailer for several hours after dark when they were launched on their first mission of the night into IV Corps in the Delta. The target was supposed to be a large number of enemy troops along the coast, or as Captain Norm Turner said, "A million VC standing at parade rest along the beach."⁸ By the time the flight reached the target area the VC had apparently vanished, but they dropped their 750 lb. bombs and strafed the area with 20mm before returning to Tan Son Nhut AB.

Both alert aircraft were rearmed and Captain Turner and 1st Lt. Watson went to sleep for a couple of hours, only to be scrambled once again. As they headed for the waiting F-100Ds, the night duty officer told them that their target was an Army Special Forces camp under attack north of Saigon in III Corps. After becoming airborne they learned that the target was at Bu Dop about 100nm north of Saigon and only about 5nm from the Cambodian border. As they approached the target area in the clear night air they could see the flares burning and they began orbiting the camp while the FAC completed working a flight of A-1Es on the target. While orbiting they were able to get a good view of the action already in progress. The special forces camp was being well lighted by the napalm dropped by the A-1Es and

by the aerial flares dropped from the C-123 flare ship. The C-123, call sign "Smokey," flew around in a racetrack pattern and every-time over the camp would drop a flare so that there were one or two flares burning all the time. This kept the camp well illuminated and they could easily see the A-1Es working. The FAC notified Captain Turner that he was getting low on fuel and had to leave, but that they should continue to hold and another FAC would be up shortly.

About fifteen minutes later the new FAC, "Viper 7", arrived from his base at Hon Quan, which was about 75nm north of Saigon. By this time a very low, thin scud deck had begun to form and Captain Turner and 1st Lt. Watson could no longer see the target. The FAC, Captain Hal Howbower, briefed the flight that the special forces camp was under attack by North Vietnamese, some of whom were inside the perimeter of the camp. The "friendlies" inside the camp were being fired upon from the runway. The camp was triangular shaped with a 2000 foot long runway along one side. The North Vietnamese had placed some machine guns along a small treeline beside the runway and were firing into the camp and beginning to infiltrate further inside. Because of the low scud deck, Captain Turner decided to hit the target first and left 1st Lt. Watson orbiting high.

Captain Turner had to fly way out to the northwest, which he later determined to be into Cambodia, in order to find the edge of the low scud deck. He started back in very low toward the camp and found that the visibility was very hazy and the whole situation could best be described as "spooky." There was much reflection off the scud from the flares and everything had lost its color and appeared only in shades of grey. On this first pass back toward the target Captain Turner flew into the scud layer and could not see, so he pulled back up into the clear. On the next try he got down even lower and managed to get underneath the layer which he estimated to be no more than a 500 foot ceiling. Captain Turner headed for the flare lights but again could not see anything until he was right on top of the camp.

He had his cockpit armament switches set up for rockets and guns, but he also was carrying two 750 lb. bombs on the inboard pylons which he would be unable to use due to the low altitude of the scud layer. Captain Turner pressed on into the target and could see several buildings on fire inside the camp. The visibility was extremely poor because of all the haze and smoke from the flares and previous ordnance drops, and Captain Turner later was to remark that he normally would never have gone down into a situation like that except they were in extremely serious trouble inside the camp. However he remembers that he mostly was afraid that he would not be able to get his ordnance off onto the target. He flew by the camp several times but was still unable to see well enough to expend any ordnance. On about the fourth pass he flew directly over the camp going the wrong direction for an attack, but still could not see much until he was right on top of it. Captain Turner flew on west for about two or three miles out into the clear and pulled up into a wifferrill type turn and reversed course back under the scud along the same path. He picked up the camp at a slight angle to the runway and rolled into a vertical banked turn when he got in close and fired off the two pods of 2.75 inch rockets in about a one degree dive angle. He also squeezed off a three to four second burst of 20mm High Explosive Incendiary along the treeline. Captain Turner continued in his turn until after he cleared the area where he thought he would run into ricochets or fragments, then rolled wings level and pulled up into the clear.

Meanwhile, the FAC had been doing an outstanding job of trying to help Captain Turner acquire the target. He would let down through the scud, find the camp, spiral back up through the layer and direct the C-123 flare ship where to drop the flares. The FAC got really excited over Captain Turner's run and said it was really good work. "Viper 7" reported that Captain Turner's ordnance was right on target and that the one pass had silenced quite a few of the machine guns. He then cleared 1st Lt. Watson down onto the target who also had to go through the same gyrations in order

to locate the camp, but he also finally did expend his ordnance. As 1st Lt. Watson joined up with Captain Turner for the return flight to Tan Son Nhut AB, the FAC again reported that the Army troops inside the camp said that all the enemy machine guns had stopped firing.⁹

Captain Turner later received letters from the FAC and from one of the Army officers who was inside the camp at Bu Dop and they both said that the air strike by the two 481st TFS F-100s probably saved the camp that night. Captain Turner and 1st Lt. Watson each were later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for this mission, becoming the first 481st TFS pilots to win a high decoration for combat. Captain Turner would fly another combat tour over North Vietnam and Laos in McDonnell F-4s several years later, but he recalls that the night mission at Bu Dop was his most demanding and personally gratifying combat mission.¹⁰ Ironically, two of the three pilots directly involved in this mission were later killed in combat. 1st Lt. Donald Watson was killed only eleven days later when his F-100D burst into flames and crashed while making a napalm pass against a VC Regimental Headquarters north of Saigon. He was the first fatality in the 481st TFS.¹¹ Captain Hal Howbower, the FAC, was killed in January or February, 1966.¹²

Unfortunately not every mission was as successful as the one at Bu Dop and not every cry for help was answered. 1st Lt. Gerald Salome remembered one mission where they wanted to respond to a unit in distress, but were unable to because of the technical and political restrictions involved in the war in Vietnam. "It started out to be a day mission, but we were diverted from our primary and secondary targets and were holding as a flight of four just a few miles north of Saigon just as evening was beginning. I remember looking down and seeing the Saigon River reflecting the setting sun. The Tactical Air Control Center was attempting to locate a new target for us. Captain Thales "Tad" Derrick and Captain Stephen "Chad" Dvorchak were two of the other pilots, but I've forgotten who was the fourth."¹³ We heard a call on 'Guard' frequency for assistance issued by a Navy River Assault Group boat down in the Delta region. He said he was under severe crossfire from two shore based .50 calibers and he really sounded desperate. We pleaded with III Corp TACC to release us so that we might go help. III Corp would not do it, I don't know why, I think it was just a breakdown in communications, possibly some airman just didn't know exactly what was going on. Anyway, we heard later that the RAG boat really took gas, killing several, including the U.S. Navy Lieutenant advisor. It struck close to home because I had met the fellow about two weeks previously while flying with the FACs down at My Tho."¹⁴

In July the 481st TFS was selected to provide fighter escort for Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, while he was on an inspection tour in South Vietnam. Most of the pilots considered this to be somewhat of a dubious honor, since some recent negative comments by Secretary McNamara concerning the expendability and career retention of fighter pilots had not enhanced his popularity with them. The 481st TFS escorted the North American T-39 Sabreliner carrying Secretary McNamara and General William Westmoreland from Tan Son Nhut AB to Da Nang AB where they spent most of the day. On the return flight to Tan Son Nhut AB the F-100Ds were called upon to attack a VC command post, which also served as an airpower demonstration for the Secretary. The flight was composed of Lt. Col. Harold Comstock, the squadron commander; Captain Robert "Pat" Barry, the squadron operations officer; Captain William Kenty; and 1st Lt. Gerald Salome. The fighters pounded the VC command post with 750 lb. bombs, 2.75 inch rockets, and 20mm while the T-39 remained at a safe distance and watched the show. Upon landing at Tan Son Nhut AB Secretary McNamara and General Westmoreland complemented the pilots and said they were delighted to witness TAC's air power in action.¹⁵

The missions flown by the 481st TFS in South Vietnam fell into two general classifications; pre-planned, which were scheduled everyday, and alert missions in which aircraft were scrambled to

meet the emergency need for air power. All missions were tightly controlled and no ordnance was expended without the fighter aircraft being under the control of either an airborne or ground FAC. The RVN District Chief also had control of which targets could be hit within his district and working in conjunction with the TACC was the final word.

A pre-planned mission usually began late in the evening prior to the day it was to be flown when the Frag Order outlining the next day's operations was received by the squadron. The Frag Order contained a brief description of the target, such as "suspected VC concentration," or "suspected VC headquarters;" the target coordinates in Universal Military Grid numbers; the number of aircraft to be employed; type ordnance to be used; the FAC callsign and radio frequency; and the time-over-target. The Squadron Operations Officer then assigned the pilots and aircraft for the missions. The pre-mission flight briefing usually was held about an hour and a half prior to take-off at Intelligence. The briefing covered all aspects of the mission, however usually there was no Intelligence briefing of any great amount since little was ever known of the targets and they generally were of a fleeting nature. After the mission was completed each pilot would debrief with his crew chief concerning the mechanical condition of his aircraft and then the flight as a group would debrief with the Squadron Intelligence Officer.

The types of ordnance used by the 481st TFS in South Vietnam just about covered the entire realm of conventional weapons in the USAF inventory. Most commonly employed were 500 and 750 lb. general purpose bombs; LAU-3 rocket pods containing 19 2.75 inch folding fin rockets; 750 lb. napalm; a highly effective anti-personnel weapon known as CBU; and 20mm High Explosive Incendiary cannon. The 481st TFS was among the first USAF squadrons to use the Mk-82 "Snakeye" retarded bomb in combat, although the U.S. Navy had been using them for some time. The AGM-12B "Bullpup" missile also was fired in small numbers by the 481st TFS, primarily to maintain the pilots' qualification with that weapon system. The "Bullpup" did not prove to be very reliable during the short time it was used by the "Crusaders" and in the majority of firings it went ballistic and impacted outside the target area. With other units it did prove to be a highly effective weapon though. During the first months in combat the M117 750 lb. general purpose bomb with M163 fuzes was used in quantity and the squadron was plagued with many duds on their missions. Most of these bombs had dates of manufacture of 1944 and 1945 and the M163 fuzes were of Korean War vintage, which probably accounts for the high percentage of duds. When the new Mk 82 streamlined bombs became available, the dud rate dropped radically. On one occasion an out-of-date box of 20mm ammunition was received marked, "Training Only." During this time there also was quite a controversy in the press concerning a bomb shortage in South Vietnam which was adamantly denied by the U.S. Government. Whether there was one or not is not really known, but for a short time flights of 481st TFS F-100Ds were sent out on missions with each airplane carrying only one bomb!

By August 3, 1965, only 34 days after beginning combat operations in South Vietnam, the 481st TFS "Crusaders" had logged 1000 hours of combat flying.¹⁷ Only 33 days later on September 6, 1965, the squadron marked up its 2000th hour of combat flying which is an indication of the high utilization of tactical airpower in South Vietnam. In relation to this Lt. Col. Harold Comstock said, "We have two different ground environments here. In the area south of Saigon, we face an enemy entrenched along hundreds of rivers and canals. This is the Mekong River Delta, the rice bowl of South Vietnam. In the north, the jungle begins in a series of rolling hills. Here the VC became most elusive and our spotter aircraft are invaluable.

We never strike without the permission of the Province Chief who knows the location of civilians and friendly forces within his area. It is a strange war, but one in which airpower is a deciding, highly necessary factor."¹⁸

During the first two months in combat the 481st TFS was

employed to its fullest as shown by the short time in which it took to fly 2000 hours. The squadron averaged over 30 sorties per day and each pilot usually flew at least one, and a few pilots flew two and occasionally three missions a day. A mission typical of the time was a strike against a VC stronghold 20 miles west of Saigon by two flights of 481st TFS F-100Ds. The first flight to hit the target was led by Captain Joe Reynes and included 1st Lt.

Sam Holmes, Captain Thales Derrick, and Colonel Francis Binnell, a highly respected 2nd Air Division staff officer who previously had been stationed at Cannon AFB. The FAC, Captain Jim Wagner, marked the target with a white phosphorus rocket and directed the dropping of the 750 lb. bombs. The first passes by the four F-100Ds destroyed a camouflaged building, a large earthen bunker, and a grouping of ten foxholes. As the bombs fell many VC in the bunkers and foxholes left them and ran into the surrounding trees and open fields in an effort to escape. The FAC directed the fighters to their new location and more 750 lb. bombs rained down. Meanwhile, the VC had been putting up a heavy barrage of small arms fire. The F-100s strafed the area putting up the heaviest amount of fire with 20mm HEI employing high angle strafing runs in order to penetrate into the foliage and foxhole areas. A second flight of 481st TFS F-100Ds consisting of Captain Robert "Pat" Barry, Captain Paul Phillips, 1st Lt. Tom Tilghman, and 1st Lt. Gerald Salome was diverted to the target while airborne. Still receiving moderate small arms fire, this flight dropped 750 lb. bombs and strafed with 20mm destroying another camouflaged building and twelve more foxholes. As they left the target area, the FAC reported that the resistance on the ground had halted and he could confirm at least ten VC killed.¹⁹

One of the more unusual aspects that will be of interest to aviation historians concerning the 481st TFS combat tour was the markings and decorations that were applied to the airplanes. These included squadron and mission markings, plus individual pilot decorations. While pilots decorating their aircraft certainly was not new, it was significant because it was completely against Air Force policy. In order to fully understand the importance of these markings, one must understand the operating policy of the USAF at that time.

The Air Force operated under a consolidated Wing maintenance program as designated by Air Force Manual 66-1. Under this concept all the aircraft were assigned to the Wing and in turn, all support personnel were assigned at Wing level. The fighter squadrons consisted of only the pilots and few administrative airmen and had no aircraft directly assigned to it. In normal stateside operations the pilots of the fighter squadrons would fly any or all of the many F-100s assigned to the Wing. Consequently, no squadron or personal markings of any kind were allowed on the airplanes, only official USAF markings. When a squadron was assigned a mission away from its home base, aircraft and all the necessary support personnel were assigned to it. While the squadron was operating TDY the aircraft and personnel came under its direct control, however, once the squadron returned to its home base, everything was once again placed under Wing control.

Lt. Colonel Comstock remembered that during WW II each pilot had his own aircraft and he felt that it would be beneficial if his pilots could fly the same airplane most of the time. Consequently, shortly after the arrival at Tan Son Nhut AB, he assigned each pilot an airplane and directed that whenever possible a pilot would be scheduled to fly his own aircraft. Since there were about thirty pilots assigned to the 481st TFS and a squadron normally consisted of eighteen planes, some pilots had to share the same F-100D. Soon it became apparent that there was a need for the pilots and the FACs to be able to easily identify the squadron's airplanes in flight. Lt. Col. Comstock and Captain Paul Phillips came up with the idea of painting a large green triangle on the vertical stabilizer as the squadron's mark and the words "481 TFS" in large green letters on the external fuel tanks. This idea soon caught on and within a short time other fighter squadrons in South Vietnam were painting identifying markings on their aircraft.

Captain Stephen "Chad" Dvorchak started the idea of decorating the airplanes when he asked 1st Lt. Jim Kempton to paint "The Shadow" on his F-100D. 1st Lt. Kempton followed this by painting "Lickity Split" on his own F-100D and was joined in this artistic endeavor by 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef.

1st Lt. Vanderhoef decorated the F-100D that he shared with 1st Lt. Gerald Salome with a lovely Playboy type figure named "Pretty Penny" in honor of Jerry's wife.²⁰ Soon 1st Lt. Kempton and 1st Lt. Vanderhoef were busy painting figures and names on all the 481st TFS F-100Ds which included "Why Not?", "The Mormon Meteor," "The Back Forty," "Mr. Magoo," "Hot Stuff," "Casanova," "Snoopy," "My Little Margie," and several others. The aircraft markings were completed by painting a black bomb on the left side of the fuselage for each mission the airplane had flown and a yellow or white rectangular area painted beneath the windshield frame with the pilot's and crew chief's names stenciled in one-half inch letters. Lt. Col. Comstock's F-100D carried the same skull design that he had on his P-47 during WW II and also had seven black crosses under the cockpit for the German aircraft that he had destroyed. All of these markings, while not unique in aviation history, imparted a great sense of pride to the squadron and helped the morale, especially since everyone knew that they were violating Air Force policy and getting away with it.

Another unusual aspect of the 481st TFS's combat tour was the close relationship which developed between the "Crusaders" and a group of Forward Air Controllers based in the Mekong Delta at My Tho. It began when one of the My Tho FACs was at Tan Son Nhut AB and recognized the green triangles on the tails of the F-100Ds as aircraft that he had controlled on missions in the Delta. He visited the squadron and was warmly received by the pilots who welcomed the opportunity to learn more about his job and how they could improve their own target strikes. Over the next few months a warm bond grew between the two units and many of the FACs visited the squadron and on occasion flew strike missions in the 481st TFS F-100F, the two seat version of the F-100. The members of the 481st TFS also journeyed to My Tho and often spent several days flying forward air control missions in the Delta. The pilots were not the only ones to benefit from this exchange, the Intelligence Officer and Airmen, Maintenance Officers, and several more of the support personnel also flew FAC missions, as well as missions in the F-100F, and thus gained first hand combat exposure which greatly helped the enthusiasm with which they performed their own jobs. The My Tho FACs were always welcome visitors at the 481st squadron and their Cessna O-1 "Bird Dogs" had the 481st TFS green triangle painted onto the rudder. The My Tho FACs callsign was "Beaver" and whenever visual contact was made with them on a mission they would be greeted with the somewhat risqué yell, "I see the beaver!" The insights gained by both units into the operations of the other provided a basis for a highly efficient tactical airpower force in South Vietnam's Delta.

From the very first day in South Vietnam the members of the 481st TFS had to learn to live with an almost constant flow of visitors to the squadron. Dignitaries of all types, Generals, Senators, Congressmen, correspondents, and reporters of all kinds always were in evidence. Hardly a day passed that someone of importance did not appear to inspect the operations and it became almost customary to have every aspect of the squadron's activities photographed, filmed, or recorded in some way. The press coverage received was so great during the first three or four months that the pilots jokingly referred to the 481st TFS as the "Show Biz Squadron." This great amount of attention was due primarily to the fact that the 481st TFS was the first tactical fighter squadron to operate from Tan Son Nhut AB, just outside

Saigon. This made it quite easy for anyone to visit an active combat unit without venturing too far from the comforts of Saigon. Another reason was that the squadron had a F-100F, the two seat version of the F-100. The F-100F varied from the "D" mainly in that the fuselage was approximately three feet longer in order to accommodate the extra seat and it carried only two 20mm cannons. The "F" made it possible for the correspondents

to fly on combat missions and the rear seat rarely went empty. Later during the tour when the flow of reporters had dwindled, the rear seat of the "F" often was filled with a USAF combat photographer. Near the end of the tour Lt. Col. Comstock was able to make the rear seat of the "F" available to squadron support personnel. Many crew chiefs, mechanics, the Intelligence airmen, and most of the ground officers flew on combat missions which proved to be a high morale motivator.

After three months of combat flying the 481st TFS prepared to rotate back to the States as originally planned. The C-130s were already enroute to pick up the personnel when with no apparent reason the squadron was notified that its return to the States was cancelled and the squadron was indefinitely extended in place. With everybody's hearts set on going home this was blow too hard to take and morale dropped to rock bottom. That night the Officer's, NCO's, and Airmen's Clubs were the scenes of gigantic drunks. The officers spent the evening haranguing TAC with every vehemence possible. Finally, 1st Lt. Dale Sprotbery tore the TAC patch from the front of his flying suit and strode into the latrine where he placed the TAC patch in a urinal. For the remainder of the evening every officer was able to vent his current feelings toward TAC — exactly — each time he visited the latrine. By the next day morale was improved and the high efficiency of the squadron quickly returned. The 481st TFS was not to learn until much later that the reason for the extension was to give the Air Force time to prepare fighter squadrons for permanent assignment in SEA.

The Officer's Club was also the scene of another memorable event, "The Great SAC Plaque Caper!" On the walls of the "O" Club were many small plaques bearing the emblems of USAF, Navy, and Army air units that had operated in Vietnam. One day we were surprised to find a gigantic Strategic Air Command plaque mounted on one wall, completely dominating the bar. Needless to say, the fighter pilots and other pilots at Tan Son Nhut AB were highly dismayed at this, especially since at that time SAC had no combat aircraft operating in SEA. The only SAC personnel in Vietnam was a small liaison detachment at 2nd Air Division Headquarters. The SAC Lt. Colonel who commanded the SAC detachment happened to make an unfortunate entry into the bar and immediately was set upon by many irate fighter pilots. A very hot argument soon developed over the relative merits of TAC and SAC and who was fighting the war. Captain A. V. P. "Andy" Anderson, III, a short, stubby individual, stood toe to toe with the SAC Lt. Col. in a heated shouting match. "Andy" held his own reasonably well, considering that a Captain seldom wins an argument with a Colonel. Finally, "Andy" removed the SAC plaque from the wall and uncerimoniously deposited it in a commode in the latrine. The next day found the SAC plaque again mounted on the wall of the bar, only this time it was bolted into place. The SAC plaque remained in place for several more months, an affront to all of those who were actively engaged in combat, until the 481st TFS departed from Tan Son Nhut AB in November, 1965. During the early morning hours prior to the departure of the last C-130 carrying the 481st TFS back to the States, a scene reminiscent of the 1930 gangster movies was played out. A small blue Air Force truck quietly drove up to the "O" Club and while Captain "Tad" Derrick kept the engine running, Major Joe "Turkey Joe" Turner, Captain "Andy" Anderson, and 1st Lt. Jerry Salome broke into the bar and quietly removed the SAC plaque from the wall. The plaque journeyed to the U.S. well hidden in the bottom of one of the 481st TFS mobility bins. Once back at Cannon AFB, this trophy was mounted over the urinals in the Officer's Club where it remained for several years to receive its just attention.²¹

Meanwhile the war was still going on and many tough missions remained to be flown. 1st Lt. Gerald Salome recalled one such mission that he flew with Captain Joe Reynes, Major "Pat" Barry, and 1st Lt. John Hauschildt. "The flight was on a night mission, but was diverted to airborne alert. The excitement that we all felt increased when word came that an ARVN unit near Bon Song, 45 miles north of Qui Nhon, was being hard pressed by an estimated

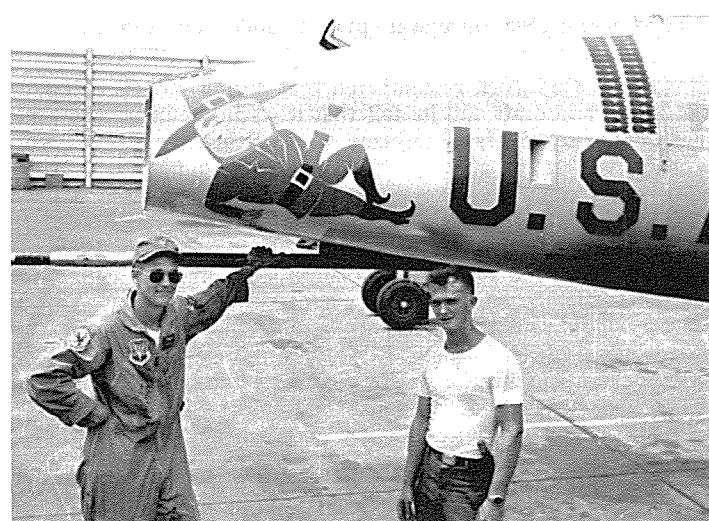


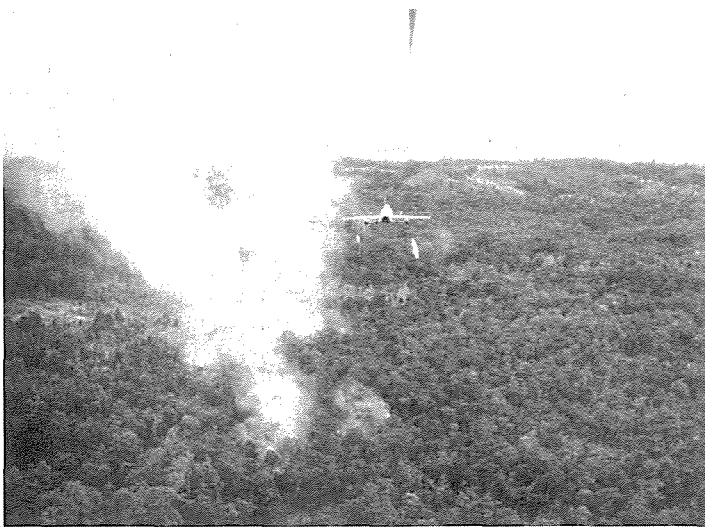
F-100D, A/C Tail No. 0-53604, flown by Lt. Col. Harold E. Comstock, the 481st TFS Commander. Skull design is same he had on his P-47 during WW II. Note seven black crosses for German aircraft he destroyed and the black bomb-mission markings showing 117 missions. 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef.



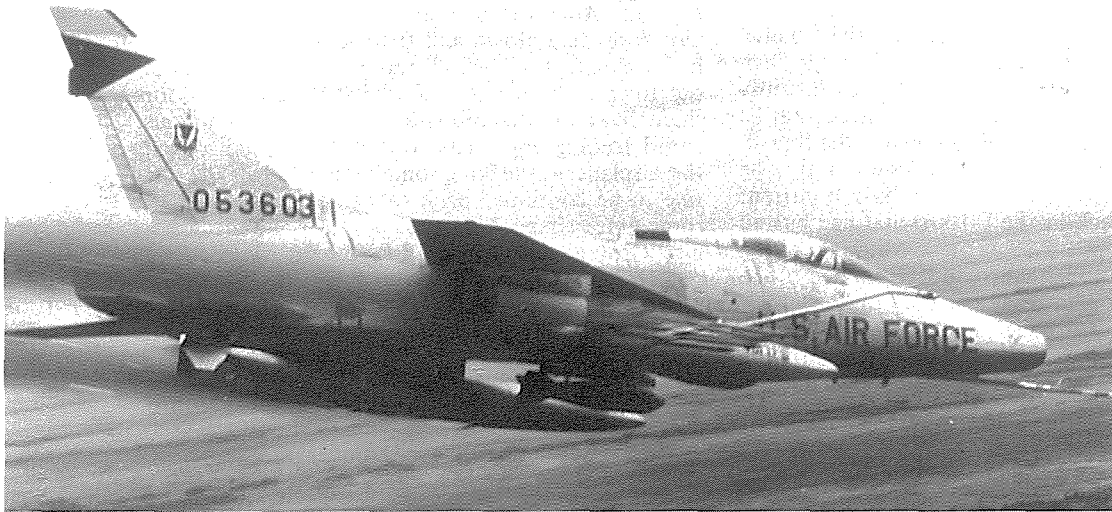
(Above) 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef poses with his F-100D, "Pretty Penny" in a revetment at Tan Son Nhut AB, South Vietnam. Armament is AGM-12B Bullpup missiles. 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef.

(Below) 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef and unidentified crew chief pose with "Leprechaun," a F-100D flown by Captain Paul Cohagan, the Maintenance Officer. A/C Tail No. is unknown. Note dirt filled steel revetments in background. 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef.



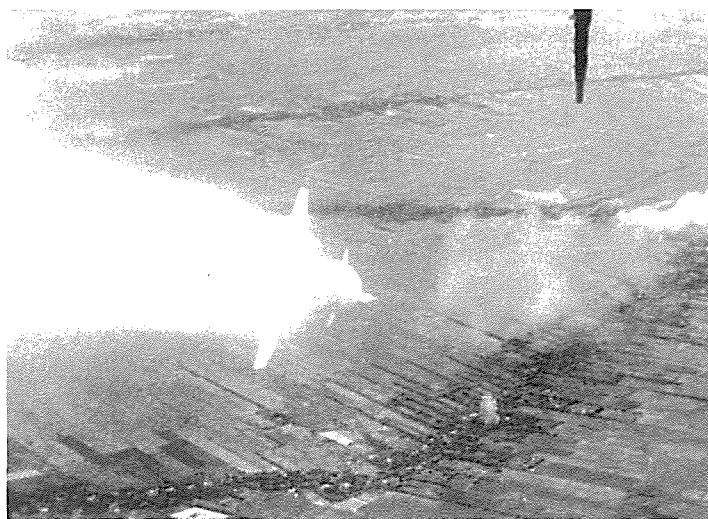


481st TFS F-100D dropping two cans of 750 lb. napalm on VC target in South Vietnam. Item at top of photo is pitot boom of trailing F-100D experimental strike camera which took this photo. USAF.



(Above) 481st TFS F-100D piloted by Lt. Col. Harold Comstock fires two LAU-3 pods of 2.75 inch folding fin rockets at VC target in the Mekong Delta. USAF

(Below) Streaking toward camouflaged VC structures is an AGM-12B Bullpup missile photographed from 481st TFS F-100D that launched it. Captain Thales Derrick launched the missile and guided it into the target southwest of Saigon. USAF.



two battalions of VC. When we arrived over the target area, we could see the crisscross of tracers coming up from the hillsides surrounding the valley, and the knowledge that everyone down there wasn't shooting only tracers, but other types of bullets as well, made the whole thing pretty frightening.

The FAC described our target from a very low altitude and how he escaped from being hit, I'll never know. You have to be either very brave or a little nuts to fly that low with stuff flying around as it was that night. Personally, I think he was outstanding.

A flight had just left and an F-100 had gotten shot down not too long before we got there and this made us a little angry. We could still hear the distress signal from his survival radio which he left in the area after they picked him up in a helicopter. The darkness of the night and the heaviness of the ground fire added to the tension and excitement. Also the absence of a flare aircraft added to the flight's difficulties.

It was one of the toughest missions I have ever been on, but because there were people down there who needed help, we felt we could throw away the book. We were also a little low on fuel and had time for only one pass, but we laid our bombs right on the target thanks to the FAC's directions. We got our job done, which was to expend the range of destruction started by the

previous strikes. Usually you don't get the big picture on what is happening on an individual mission until you land, but this time we knew exactly what was going on and it made us all the more determined to do the job."²

Captain Norman Turner led a 481st TFS flight on the first jet strike against a North Vietnamese build-up that was to develop into one of the largest ground battles of the Vietnamese war. A special forces camp had been under siege for about a week and by October 19, 1965, it was being widely covered in the press as the "Battle of Ple Mei." Captain Turner was leading a flight of four F-100Ds when they were diverted from their pre-planned target to Ple Mei which was under attack. The flight dropped their ordnance and at that time it didn't appear to be too bad. Later that day, Captain Turner and 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef were scrambled on an alert mission back to the same target, but by this time the ground fighting was going hot and heavy. For some reason the North Vietnamese were trying to take the special forces camp in the daytime, usually they attacked only at night. The enemy was storming the perimeter fence when the F-100Ds arrived and dropped napalm and strafed right along the fence inside the camp. Captain Turner vividly remembered seeing the defensive trip flares around the camp igniting while he was making a strafing pass. Later when the North Vietnamese finally retreated towards the west and Cambodia, another large battle developed in the Ira Drang Valley."³

One of the most significant missions flown by the 481st TFS was a special night strike in the Delta near the end of the tour in

Vietnam. Informers had gotten information to Intelligence that a meeting of VC District Chiefs would occur about 60nm southwest of Saigon. Eight F-100Ds, led by Lt. Col. Harold Comstock, were assigned to attack this group. Major Robert Finley flew in the Fairchild C-123 flare ship to coordinate the flare drops with the fighters and the flights were led into the dark target area by a FAC in a Cessna O-1. The fighters circled wide of the target to keep the noise down and the FAC marked the target by turning on his rotating beacon as he flew over. The F-100Ds swooped in out of the darkness and dropped CBU's on the first passes, apparently obtaining complete surprise. 750 lb. bombs were then dropped and the area thoroughly gone over with 20mm. The aircraft all returned to base and nothing more was heard about the results of this mission until the 481st TFS had returned to Cannon AFB. Several weeks after returning to Cannon AFB, New Mexico, the squadron received word that ground troops had entered the target area and had found 390 VC that had been killed during the air strike.²⁴

By early fall the influx of newspapermen and combat photographers had slowed and the squadron felt that perhaps finally they could operate normally. However, unexpectedly one morning an unknown "Full Bird" Colonel walked in and announced to Lt. Col. Comstock that he was the new commander of a Provisional Wing that was being formed and that he was going to fly with the 481st TFS. Lt. Col. Comstock replied that he would decide who flew his F-100s and that the only way the Colonel would fly them was to have a letter signed by the 2nd Air Division Commander. Several days later this Colonel dutifully returned with an appropriate letter and again announced that he would fly the F-100s. While Captain Charles Summers, the Squadron Stan Eval Officer, was preparing the Colonel to fly, he determined that the Colonel not only did not have a current Standard Evaluation Flight Check in the F-100D, but had busted his most recent Stan Eval ride in a T-39 at Clark AB, Philippines, where he had recently been fired from his job and shipped off to South Vietnam. Armed with this information Lt. Col. Comstock was able to delay the obnoxious Colonel for another week or so, but finally with a current Stan Eval he began flying with the squadron. The Flight Surgeon, Captain Gary "Doc" Henderson, then came up with the news for Lt. Col. Comstock that our unwelcome Colonel did not have a current flight physical. Lt. Col. Comstock again was able to ground the Colonel for a short time, but he soon returned and continued flying missions with the 481st TFS. For the remainder of the tour in Vietnam the 481st TFS was saddled with this unwanted pilot who had been shipped to the combat zone in order to get him out of 13th Air Force Headquarters. The squadron's return to the States, leaving this Colonel behind, was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

On November 13, 1965, Captain Charles Summers, one of the squadron's most popular pilots, caused quite a bit of concern by being shot down while on his 124th combat mission. He was attacking a VC concentration about 130nm south of Saigon with Major Robert Finley and 1st Lt. Dale Sprobery and was hit by ground fire while on his last strafing pass. He heard an explosion and immediately lost control of the aircraft. However, he managed to head the damaged F-100D toward a friendly village and fought the controls trying to maintain enough altitude to eject safely. By the time Captain Summers had regained control of his F-100D he was too low for a safe ejection, but he punched out anyway, even though by then he had passed over the friendly village. He was in his parachute for only a short time before he landed in a thicket in the middle of a swamp. Captain Summers heard several shots nearby and decided to get away from his parachute, but that was when he discovered that he could not stand or walk. He had attempted to contact the F-100s circling overhead with his survival radio, but since it was not working very well, he started crawling. Racked with pain in his back he managed to crawl about 150 yards through the roots of the trees and the murky foot deep water. The rescue helicopter that had been called for by the orbiting F-100s finally arrived overhead and dropped down by his parachute, which was promptly sucked up into the rotor blades, causing the rescue chopper to crash into

the swamp. Yards away, Captain Summers unsuccessfully tried to stand and draw their attention and finally fired two survival flares which were seen by the F-100s overhead. Captain Summers meanwhile had started crawling back through the swamp toward the chopper and a second rescue helicopter soon picked him and the other helicopter crew up and flew them to the base hospital at Tan Son Nhut AB. Captain Summer's injury was diagnosed as a compression fracture of a vertebrae and he was evacuated by MATS back to Cannon AFB where he recovered quickly and returned to flying duty.²⁵

One of the more interesting aircraft damage episodes happened to Captain Joe Reynes while working a "troops in contact" mission at Plei Me along with Captain Charles Deeds and Captain Charles Summers. The F-100Ds had been having a gun seal problem during this time and when the 20mm cannons were fired, especially during long bursts, gases would accumulate in the gun bays and explode. The flight had dropped bombs and napalm and had made several strafing passes when Captain Reynes spotted some guns that were firing at the other two F-100s. He swung wide in an effort to surprise the gunners and started "hosing" one position and in response the entire side of the hill opened up at him. He kicked the rudder and tried to get them all, and that was when the gun bay doors blew. Captain Reynes heard a loud explosion and immediately started an afterburner climb and turned toward the large American base at Pleiku. He had suspicions that the gun bay doors had blown and that he had not been hit, but until he had a chance to check all the gauges, he wasn't sure. As he looked out toward the wings he saw that the gun bay doors had impaled themselves on the inboard external stores pylons. The left inboard leading edge slats were damaged and locked together and the airplane was leaking some fuel. The F-100D seemed to handle fine so he continued back to Tan Son Nhut AB where he carried some extra airspeed on the approach and made a successful landing. Ground inspection showed that the doors had also torn several holes in the fuselage and in the wing leading edges. The ground crews went right to work and Captain Reynes' F-100D was soon flying again.²⁶

What made this episode even more exciting was that Captain Reynes had been shot down on a mission just several days before.²⁷ He had been attacking a target near the "Seven Sisters," a grouping of mountains in the Delta, with three other F-100s when his aircraft was hit and started venting fuel overboard. Captain Reynes and his wingman, 1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef, climbed to 20,000 feet while the other two F-100Ds continued to work over the target. At altitude Captain Reynes' damaged F-100D continued to vent fuel and with a loss of oil pressure and an overheat, it became obvious that the engine was going to blow up soon, so he pointed it out toward the sea and ejected. 1st Lt. Vanderhoef had been "squawking emergency" and in short order a multitude of aircraft were flying CAP over Captain Reynes, so many in fact that it became dangerous. Captain Reynes finally was picked up by a rescue helicopter and by the time he arrived back at Tan Son Nhut AB he had consumed several bottles of booze and was well oiled. He was met by Lt. Colonel Comstock and Colonel Budwing, the Base Commander, who received Joe's tirade on why couldn't he get more than six rounds for his .38? While on the ground Captain Reynes had heard quite a bit of shooting nearby and had laid out five rounds for the VC and one for himself. Captain Reynes had more to fear from the VC than the average pilot, for he had previously been an advisor to RVN T-28 and A-1E fighter squadrons and was a friend of General Ky, the Commander of the RVN Air Force. Consequently, the VC had a price on his head. For this reason Captain Reynes would never allow his name to be used in any press release concerning the 481st TFS. Apparently Captain Reynes' rampage with the Base Commander got results, for after that our support from Base Supply improved immensely.

The ground defenses encountered in South Vietnam were very light and were mostly small arms, automatic weapons, and occasionally .50 calibre fire and the 481st TFS pilots referred to South Vietnam as "one big gunnery range." During daylight

missions the fighter pilots normally did not know when they were receiving ground fire unless the FAC reported it. However, during night missions the muzzle flashes on the ground were easily seen. Most of the hits that the 481st TFS F-100s received were from small arms fire and caused little damage.

During the six month combat tour the "Crusader's" F-100s received many hits but only six airplanes were shot down. Captain John Parker was the first pilot to go down and the others were: Captain Joseph Reynes, Captain Charles Summers, Captain Sam Holmes, 1st Lt. Donald Watson, and 1st Lt. John Hauschildt. All ejected safely and were rescued except for 1st Lts. Watson and Hauschildt who were killed.^{2 8}

The F-100 was originally conceived to serve as an air superiority fighter during the latter stages of the Korean War, a role in which it was never to be employed in any great extent in combat. Instead it became the backbone of Tactical Air Command and one of the greatest close air support airplanes of all time. The "Beaver" FACs from My Tho rated it second only to the Douglas A-1, which had a tremendous ordnance carrying ability and loiter time, and preferred the F-100D over other USAF and U.S. Navy jet fighters that they worked. Major Norman Turner analyzed the F-100D and the 481st TFS pilots in South Vietnam thusly. "The F-100D was a good airplane for use in moderately or less defended areas. I don't think I'd care to fly one in North Vietnam too much, certainly not against the MIGs. It was very accurate air to ground, possibly more accurate than the F-4, mainly because the pilots had to maintain a higher degree of proficiency. Early in the war we had more leeway in tactics, especially in working with the FACs. They were much more restrictive in later years. The 481st TFS pilots were all very eager, for most this was their first combat experience. We thought the war might be over before we had a chance to prove ourselves and do the flying that we wanted. So we probably pressed more than we needed to and certainly more than we did later in the war under the same type of situations, but not necessarily on missions where someone was under attack. Often we would go too low down in the weeds and press an attack on something that really wasn't that important a target. We were all so eager and new to it. Consequently we lost several airplanes and took a lot of hits. We were not cautious at times and certainly not too cost effect concious."^{2 9}

In November, 1965, the 481st TFS received word that it would be replaced by a squadron that would be permanently stationed in South Vietnam and then we finally knew why the planned re-deployment in August had been cancelled. The 415th TFS from England AFB arrived with their F-100Ds in the new camouflaged paint scheme and by November 27, 1965, all the 481st TFS personnel were on their way home, leaving behind the well used, shiny silver F-100Ds and an enviable six month combat record. The 481st TFS had flown more than 3600 sorties and 5,025 combat hours and twenty-one pilots flew more than 100 combat missions with most averaging 130 to 140. The confirmed mission results are listed in Table 3 and while these totals were later certainly surpassed by the PCS squadrons which followed, they are an indication of the high level of activity that occurred during this time of intense ground action all over South Vietnam. Confirmed mission results were very difficult to obtain, due mainly to the terrain and the fleeting nature of the targets, and the main source was from either the FAC or from friendly ground forces that entered the target area later. The success of the 481st TFS was due largely to the teamwork displayed by the flying and support personnel which helped to establish an incredible 98% aircraft in commission rate that assured that every mission was flown as scheduled. At no time during the entire six month combat tour was a combat mission aborted due to mechanical reasons, a truly remarkable accomplishment.^{3 0}

On 4 March, 1966, at Cannon AFB, New Mexico, 174 medals and decorations were awarded to the pilots, ground crewmen, and other support personnel of the 481st TFS. Awards presented included many DFCs, Air Medals and Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal, Bronze Stars, Air Force Commendation Medals, a few

Purple Hearts, and the Legion of Merit to Lt. Col. Harold E. Comstock. The 481st TFS also was presented the USAF Outstanding Unit Award for its superior flying safety record and its combat activities in Vietnam. However, the most important award was the pride that every "Crusader" carried within himself that in his first combat he had done the job in the manner of a true USAF professional.



481st TFS F-100Ds in formation on "Initial Approach" at Tan Son Nhut AB, prior to "break" for landing. No. 2 F-100D is "Pretty Penny" and No. 4 is "The Shadow." Note green triangle on the vertical stabilizer as the 481st TFS identifying mark and TAC insignia. Also note "481 TFS" painted on the 335 gallon external fuel tanks. Bent probe on right wing is the air-to-air refueling boom. Aircraft are over Saigon. USAF

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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TABLE 1

481st TFS F-100D's DEPLOYED ON "TWO BUCK 16"

Aircraft Tail Number	Pilot
0-53604	Lt. Col. Harold Comstock
0-53613*	Capt. Charles Summers
63054	Capt. Thales Derrick
0-52837*	1st Lt. Peter Vanderhoef
63074*	Capt. William Kenty
63063	Capt. Stephen Dvorchak
63056	Lt. Col. David Williams
0-53548	1st Lt. Thomas Tilghman
0-52795*	Capt. Norman Turner
0-42177*	1st Lt. Jimmy Kempton
0-53569	Capt. William Carrothers
0-53603	Capt. Joseph Reynes
63100	Capt. Robert Barry
0-53528	Capt. Douglas Young
0-53622	Capt. Alvord Anderson, III
63040	1st Lt. Dale Sprotbery
0-53559	Capt. Paul Phillips
0-53549	1st Lt. Donald Watson

& REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT¹

0-53759	0-53608	63285
63878	0-53632	63097
0-42213	0-53766	63334*
63868	0-53522	0-53602

63923 (F-100F) 63751 (F-100F)

1. During the combat tour in South Vietnam aircraft were ferried to the 481st TFS from PCS F-100 squadrons at Clark AB, Philippines as replacements for F-100s that had been shot down or for aircraft that were sent to Clark AB to undergo periodic maintenance inspections that could not be accomplished at squadron level. For the scale model builder, Micro Scale 1/72 decal sheet No. 72-126 has markings for several 481st TFS F-100s.

* Indicates aircraft that were shot down on combat missions.

TABLE 2.

CONFIRMED MISSION RESULTS³¹

1767 Viet Cong killed
3337 structures destroyed
2454 structures damaged
78 secondary explosions
147 sampans sunk
20 tunnels collapsed
11 bunkers destroyed
7 gun emplacements destroyed
3 fuel dumps destroyed
2 boat docks destroyed
2 Viet Cong radio communication stations destroyed

TABLE 3

TOTAL ORDNANCE EXPENDED BY 481st TFS³²

1,597,145 rounds — 20mm HEI
3,829 — 750 lb. general purpose bombs
1,681 — 500 lb. general purpose bombs
155 — 500 lb. Snakeye bombs
3,952 — 750 lb. napalm
18,961 — 2.75 inch rockets
25 — AGM 12B Bullpup missiles
646 — CBU

ORDNANCE COSTS

750 lb. bomb — \$268 (\$346 with fuzes)
500 lb. bomb — \$135 (\$147.60 with fuzes)
20mm HEI — \$2.45 per round
2.75 inch rockets — \$20.00 per rocket
CBU — \$4,556 per pod
750 lb. napalm — \$215 per can

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Lowe is a pilot for United Air Lines currently flying as a First Officer on the Boeing 737 out of O'Hare in Chicago. He served in the USAF as an Intelligence Officer and was assigned to the 27th TFW at Cannon for three years where he accompanied the 481st TFS on many deployments within the U.S. and also all over the Far East. He later served with the 388th TFW at Korat AB, Thailand, a F-105 unit flying combat missions over North Vietnam, and completed his USAF tour as an instructor at the Armed Forces Air Intelligence School at Lowry AFB, Colorado. He is very active in the Antique Airplane Association and presently serves as the Illinois AAA State Director and also as the President of the Stearman Restorers Association. He is shown here with his 1942 Stearman N2S-3 which he restored. Photo: Kenneth D. Wilson.

