

The professionalism and overall superior performance demonstrated by members of the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron reflect great credit upon themselves and the United States Air Forces in Europe.

The 614th continued to fly the F-4 aircraft until early in 1983. In April 1983, the squadron received the F-16A/B, block 15 aircraft and in 1989, upgraded to the F-16C/D, block 30 aircraft.

On 28 August 1990 the 614th squadron deployed 24 F-16 aircraft with three KC-10 tanker aircraft to Doha, Qatar. This was to be the start of a combat tour as part of Desert Storm. During the 42 days of "Operation Desert Storm" the squadron flew 1303 combat missions and delivered 3.2 million pounds of weapons. The squadron was deployed for approximately nine months until the end of hostilities. There is a great deal of information that needs to be added to the Desert Storm combat tour of the 614th. However, on Day 3 of the Gulf War, which was 19 January 1991, the 614th participated in a large scale attack on Iraq and the following narrative addresses some aspects of that mission.

614th TFS Mission 19 January 1991

On 19 January, as more than 70 F-16s, along with F-15 escorts and EF-111 and F-4G support, headed toward Baghdad, the weather steadily worsened. Just after the package broke out of the weather north of the Iraqi border, antiaircraft artillery (AAA) fire disrupted the formation. About a fourth of the pilots could not find the rest of the formation and had to return home. The first group to strike were the F-16s from the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing, which hit the nuclear research facility near Baghdad. Unfortunately for the following F-16s, the Suppression of Enemy Air Defense package of F-4Gs had fired all its high-speed anti-radiation missiles and left the area, as did the covering F-15s. **That left the F16s from the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron with no air cover and no electronic support assets. The F-16s immediately came under heavy surface-to-air missile and AAA fire -- two were shot down.**

- 401 Tactical Fighter Wing Report

Detailed Discussion of the 19 January Mission:

Keshel,

I beg your pardon; either I'm getting slightly paranoid today, or I don't understand you at all: what more should be revealed in addition to the following story?

It simply remains unknown what exactly happened, and apparently nobody wants to talk about it, while pilots involved in the mission explain a different story.

The story I'd like to explain started with the article "Lucky Devils", published by S.M. Huertas in the June 1992 issue of AFM. In that article, Huertas basically described

the 614th TFS "Lucky Devils" (at the time a part of the 401st TFW, then stationed at Torrejon, Spain) participation in the II GW/Desert Storm. Between others he mentioned also the large strike flown against Baghdad, on 19 January 1991.

As known, the Iraqi capital was certainly the best defended place in Iraq, and an area reserved for F-111Fs and F-117As which flew strikes against targets in the area only at night. On this day, however, somebody decided that F-16s of the 401st and 388th were not only to attack the Nuclear Research Facilities at Al Tuweitha, located SW of the downtown, but also the IrAF Headquarters, the Republican Guards Headquarters and the al-Dowrah oil refinery, in SE Baghdad.

According to Huertas, the 614th TFS had to send 16 F-16s into this operation (these were to target IrAF HQ and the RGC HQ) which indeed seems not to have been the best one prepared ever. While closing on their tanker track, 614th found out there were not enough tankers. Only after some improvisation was one found and the whole formation could go on. While approaching the Iraqi border, the whole formation (including four F-15Cs, two EF-111A, eight F-4Gs and the whole 388th TFW, some 48 F-16Cs plus the best part of the 401st TFW), confronted bad weather, which threatened to break the formation apart.

Clearing the bad weather, and entering Iraq, the package came under dense large-caliber AAA, which caused further problems, and - according to Huertas - something like 25% of the planes to abort their mission. Approaching Baghdad and their IP, F-16s of the 614th encountered dense light AAA at 10-12,000ft (3.658m), but heavy flak was detonating as high as 27,000ft (8.230m).

The 388th hit its target - al Tuweitha - first, supported closely by EF-111As and F-4Gs. But, in the process, according to Huertas, Wild Weasels spent all their HARMs before the 614th even entered the area, and all the warnings went unheard. In the end, the EF-111As, F-4Gs and F-15Cs turned around and exited the area together with the rest of the 388th TFW. The 614th flew over Baghdad alone, found out the overcast covered the two designated target, and the package CO, Maj. John Nips Nichols, decided to abort, instead going for the al-Dowrah. Approaching that target, they were warned of SA-2s being fired, but the first 12 Falcons went in and dropped their Mk.84 bombs reasonably precisely (indeed, the destruction was shown even on the CNN).

As the last section approached, Maj. E. T. Tullia, "Stroke 3", received additional SA-2 and SA-3 warnings, but his ALQ-131 apparently delayed enemy action until he dropped his bombs as well. After pulling off, Tullia's RWR screamed, warning him of SAMs in the air, but missiles passed harmlessly by and exploded far away from his F-16.

Meanwhile, according to Huertas, many other SAMs were fired at the rest of the formation:

Multiple SAMs were launched at the package, some ballistic and unguided and some tracking with a full system lock-on. In spite of this, some members of the package refused to jettison their bombs until clear of the city to avoid possible damage to civilian non-combatants. One of the missiles guided toward "Clap 4", piloted by Capt. Mike "Cujo" Roberts. A missile break warning sounded over the radio and Cujo saw the missile as it guided towards him. It passed behind his aircraft and detonated, and Cujo believed he is safe until his aircraft began to pitch over and he lost control. As the jet approached negative 1 g, Cujo ejected over downtown Baghdad.

No one observe an ejection, nor saw a chute."

Meanwhile, Tullia flew straight into more problems. He defeated several SAMs, but additional were fired, bleeding the speed and energy until he finally descended to 10,000ft (3.050m) - which put him into the envelope of light AAA: The only answer in this case was to select afterburner in order to increase the speed and climb. However, being extremely low on fuel and 700 nm from home, afterburner must be used very judiciously."

While Tullia tried to increase the speed without using afterburner, two SA-6s were fired at him, one of them passing so close during his evasion manoeuvres, that the pilot heard its roar. Evading two other SA-6s, as well as something else fired with optical guidance, Tullia finally managed to fly away from Baghdad.

But, another F-16 was hit by an SA-3 (meanwhile it seems the SA-3s are more dangerous for F-16s than SA-6....): the one flown by Capt. Tico. Huertas: "He had an uncorrelated missile launch on his RWR, and as he turned, he visually acquired the missile guiding on his aircraft from below. He timed his break turn, the missile overshot his aircraft and detonated behind him. Unfortunately, the miss distance was not sufficient to guarantee the safety of his aircraft, and Tico observed large, peeled-back holes on the surface of the jet with fuel, oil, and hydraulic fluid forming a smoke trail behind him.

With all the warning lights in his cockpit illuminated, Tico managed to distance from Baghdad. And, now comes the most interesting part. From Huertas: "Fortunately Capt. Bruce Crutch Cox was nearby, and the two of them formed a Flight as they headed south. As the two were egressing, Crutch received some very unusual radar warning indications. About that time the AWACS called bandits airborne and heading south out of Baghdad. The bandits in this case were MiG-29 Fulcrum fighters. Crutch pitched back to look at the source of the threat warning with his radar and saw that he was flying line abreast with one of the MiGs. As he turned into the MiG and locked onto it with his radar, it turned and ran. Since Crutch didn't have the fuel to chase him, he turned his attention back to helping Tico.

"Shortly after, Tico's jet quit flying. He was forced to eject over 150 miles (250km) into Iraq...Tico was captured by nomadic, Bedouin tribesmen of Iraq."

According to data known to us, Capt. Tico ejected some 36nm West of Tallil AB, after flying well 100nms down from Baghdad, and passing some of well defended sites around Najaf, Samawah and Nasiriyah, but also places where Iraqi MiG-29s and MiG-25s were stationed.

I must admit, this made me somewhat curious if it is possible that the mentioned Iraqi MiG-29, confronted by Capt. Cox, might have been guilty for the final demise of Tico's plane. Yet, being busy with other things, I never came to search for more information about this one. However, last year, a kind friend of mine made me aware of the book "Vipers In The Storm: Diary of a Gulf War Fighter Pilot", by Keith Rosenkranz, who flew a number of missions during the war with the 388th TFW (Hill AFB), and this author's description of the whole strike.

In short, Rosenkranz didn't mentioned bad weather, problem with tankers, SEAD assets or anything similar. No MiG-29s either.

In July last year, we then learned about website, about the author and that book being established under <http://www.vipersinthestorm.com/> and visited the site, where there is a forum on which once can talk with the author (and, I must remark, I was myself pretty much surprised how fast and which how much patience Mr. Rosenkranz is answering all the questions posted there).

So, out of pure curiosity, I posted there and - after obligatory introduction - asked Rosenkranz following questions:

My direct question for you is: do you know that planes of Tice and Cox were "attacked" by Iraqi MiG-29, which acquired both of them with its radar?....

And also:

I would like to ask you if you can remember:

- If the AWACs gave any warning (supposedly it acquired four MiGs initially and recognized them as MiG-29s) of MiG to F-16s?

-If you think that it is possible that the Tice's F-16 was also attacked by missiles fired by Iraqi MiG-29s?

As already described, Mr. Rosenkranz was very swift to respond, and very kind while doing so. Here's what he said:

"Tom,

Thank you very much for visiting the site. I'm glad you like it and I appreciate your taking the time to post a question.

Before I answer your question(s), I would like to ask you to put in an order for my book. I think doing so will give you a tremendous amount of insight regarding the war. At a minimum, it will answer a lot of what you asked.

The strike against Iraq's nuclear research facility was the largest strike package of the war, consisting of 78 aircraft. The majority of the aircraft were F-16s from our wing (the 388th) and from the 401st. The rest of the aircraft were F-15s, F-4Gs, and EF-111s.

The weather in the area of northern Saudi Arabia was fine that day. It was fine over Iraq as well. There was no problem with air refueling prior to pushing north toward Baghdad. Some of the F-16s from the 401st may have had aircraft problems, but I don't think it was as many as you may have been led to believe. In all honesty, though, I cannot say for sure if any of the 401st jets dropped out. You may be right, but it wasn't due to bad weather in the refueling track if it did in fact happen.

The entire strike package was not changed, as you have suggested. Roberts (Stroke 4) was shot down over Baghdad. His flight lead, Maj. Jeffry Tice (Stroke 1) was shot down coming off target. At that time, I was approximately 180 nm from the Saudi border. Tice was only 60 miles behind me at the time. I had a number of aircraft from Hill that were still behind me. My point is that there was not a big gap between the packages. Your information in this area, in my opinion, is incorrect.

Your implication that the F-15s, F-4Gs, and EF-111s left before the 401st arrived is also, in my opinion, incorrect. There were no Iraqi aircraft airborne above the target area. In fact, I can't remember even hearing AWACS call out a single bogey. And if they had, I promise you I would have remembered.

When Tice took his hit, he lost his avionics and there was also engine damage. He began to lose oil and eventually the engine failed. He was joined on by an EF-111, not another F-16. The EF-111 got him pointed to the south towards Saudi Arabia. As time passed, Tice - and everyone else in the package - knew he wasn't going to make it out of Iraqi territory. After his engine failed, his emergency power unit (EPU) fired. The EPU is powered by hydrazine and it only lasts for ten minutes. The EPU powers the aircraft's hydraulics so a pilot can maintain control of the aircraft while gliding.

During this time, my friends and I were proceeding south. I listened to everything that was said on the radios and I don't recall ever hearing that MiG-29s were in the area, let alone engaging anyone. I'm not saying it didn't happen, but I think my friends and I would have known if there were any MiGs in the area.

When you read the book, you will notice how I covered this event. I used my actual combat footage, which you can view on this site, and wrote down every radio call as it occurred. Many of the radio calls Tice made are included. You will even notice I included the actual zulu times of the mission's events.

A friend of mine who was in my Delta new hire class was a member of the 401st and flew in this package. I don't think he ever told me any of the things you have said. Another friend, who was with me in Taiwan a couple of weeks ago, was also a member of the 401st. Once again, I don't think he ever mentioned what you did - and we talked about that mission.

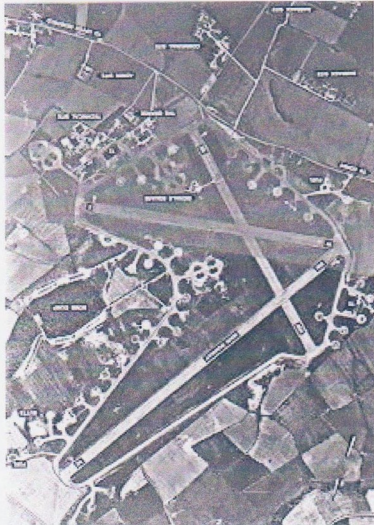
I hope you will read the book, especially this chapter, then write to me again. I don't know where you got your information from, and I don't want to downplay those who gave it to you because there may be things I was not aware of or have maybe forgotten. But there are a lot of things in your story that I just don't think are true.

Thanks again for writing and I hope to hear back from you again.

As has happened in every war since the beginning of time, there are always events and actions clouded by the intensity of the moment. As a footnote, both downed pilots were captured and became POWs. They both were recovered at the end of the war. The end of the war wasn't as kind to the 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron as it was retired and returned to inactive status, to await the next call to duty.



614th Bombardment Squadron



Deenethorpe Air Base, England (Station 128)



Housing for the 614th Squadron
of the 401st Bomb Group



European Area Map



B-17G "Maiden USA" with 614th Markings (IW)



Formation Photo from cockpit of 614th Aircraft



B-17 landing at Deenethorpe



Winter at Deenethorpe



Remains of the Deenethorpe Tower and Base Operations Building



Fred Preller, 23 March 2001

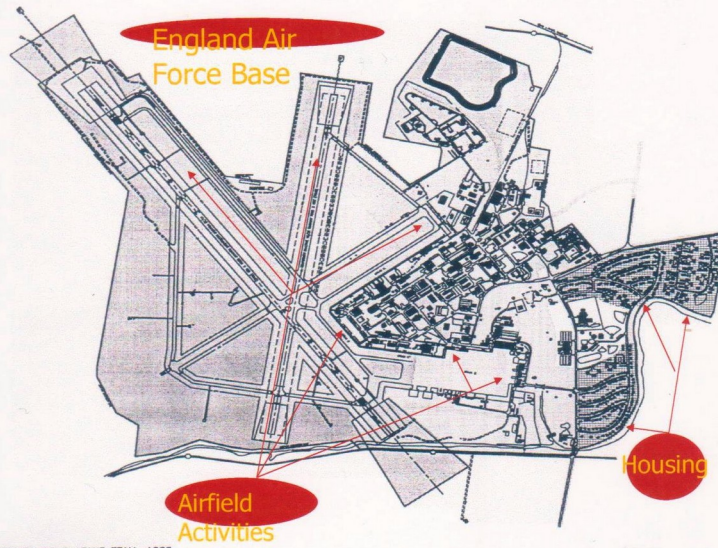
Memorial at Deenethorpe Air Base location



The Wheatsheaf Pub (614th Hangout)



614th Fighter Bomber Squadron



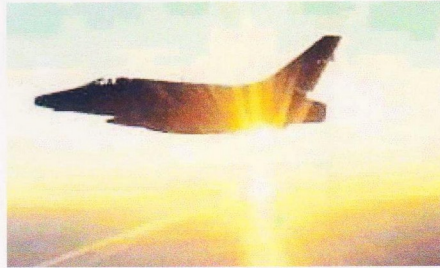
F-86F Aircraft



F-84F Aircraft Display England Air Force Base



614th Tactical Fighter Squadron

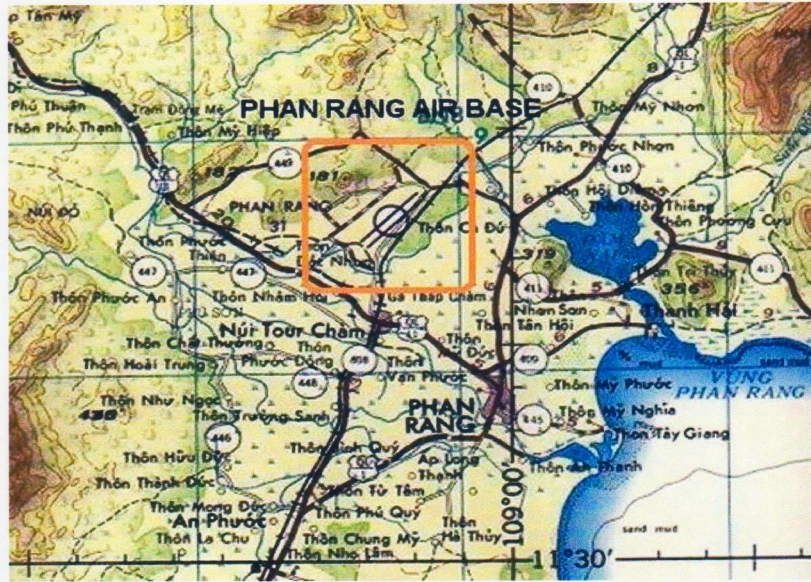


F-100 Aircraft from England Air Force Base

Deployment to Phan Rang



South Vietnam



Phan Rang Air Base Area



F-100 from 614th TFS arrives at Phan Rang



F-100D Tail Number 42187 614th TFS



F-100s from 614th TFS on combat mission



F-100D Tail Number 63158 614th TFS

Flight Line Phan Rang Air Base 1966



Torrejon Air Base, Spain



Formation Takeoff Turning Over Torrejon Village



Squadron Returning From Deployment to Aviano Air Base, Italy





Incirlik CDI, Turkey



Aviano Air Base, Italy





The Final Flight of the "Boss Bird"



January 1990

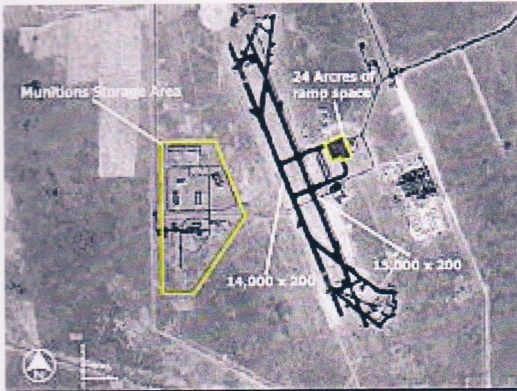
From the 614th TFS via the DC Air National Guard, 66614 arrives Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona

After Processing F-4D #66614 Gets a Well Earned Rest



Phantoms Phorever!!





Al Udeid Air Base (Doha), Qatar

