

## Flying Telephone Poles



*It was early in the Vietnam War that Air Force pilots first encountered the threat of surface-to-air missiles—SAMs. North Vietnamese forces using Soviet-built SA-2 “Guideline” SAMs shot down their first USAF aircraft in 1965. This event added a major new dimension to the air defense threat, previously consisting of fighters and anti-aircraft artillery.*

*US pilots called the SA-2s (above and left) “flying telephone poles.” The long, huge missiles could achieve speeds of Mach 3.5 and reach altitudes of 60,000 feet. The SA-2 photos on this page were snapped by an RF-101 reconnaissance aircraft near Hanoi.*



Photo via Robert F. Dorr

*USAF responded with Wild Weasels, two-seat F-100 fighters optimized for locating and destroying SAM sites. Later, the Air Force converted two-seat F-105Fs to G configuration for Wild Weasel duty. The F-105G pictured in the foreground, above, tail code 63-8320, is now on display at the National Museum of the United States Air Force, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.*