

Dummy Targets

I have known about the QF-4 program for a long while now and of all it takes to bring an aircraft back online after being in storage ["Air Force World: QF-16 Reaches IOC," November/December, p. 18]. I do understand that the program is necessary for ongoing pilot training; but I cannot understand the use of the retired QF-4s as ground targets. That, to me, is a total waste of a beautiful airframe. There are plenty of museums around the country that would love to have an F-4 for display purposes. Also I am sure that there are museums that would love to have one of the QF-4s to replace their airframes that have been damaged over time by abuse and weather.

It is just a terrible shame that USAF is just going to let the existing F-4s become ground targets for gunnery or bombing practice when they can use dummies for that. I guess that the dummies are

too busy making the decisions on how to destroy beautiful museum/display airframes that will forever be gone once they are destroyed. All we have to do is to look at what has happened throughout the years to past airframes such as the B-29, B-47, B-58, and dozens of others that have been destroyed instead of properly displayed for the public to view, walk around, touch, and imagine what it was like to live in and be part of that era. I remember B-29s and B-47s flying out of MacDill AFB, Tampa. What a beautiful sight to see.

Paul Pratt
Sarasota, Fla.

Something Smells Fishy

Your article ["Target: Ramenskoye," September, p. 102] evoked pleasant memories of my own contribution to better understanding the Soviet air force.

In the pre-Earth-satellite days of the 1950s, I was assigned to the CIA's Tehran station, working in its Soviet Operations section. The station had established an effective liaison relationship with several of the shah's air force pilots. In spring 1958, the Iranians reached an agreement with Moscow to allow their supply aircraft, a modified DC-3, to fly directly from Tehran to Moscow, this to support the Iranian military attaché group at its Moscow embassy.

The DC-3 was obliged to put down at Tbilisi, the capital of the Georgian Soviet Republic, for refueling. Following the second of these flights, we received word that the pilots had observed something the CIA should know about. On the aircraft's approach to the city's military airfield, the pilots could see, on the tarmac below, what appeared to them to be two Soviet delta wing jet fighter aircraft, not seen before.

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Imagination at work.



We, of course, informed CIA headquarters of this sighting and word came back, immediately, that the Iranian pilots had seen the products of the Mikoyan-Gurevich Aircraft Factory No. 31, known to be sited alongside the same airport.

Then followed a hurry-up effort to send to the station a handheld aerial camera. And it fell to me to teach the two pilots how to use it. It was also my job to design and fabricate a concealment device, in the rear-most portion of the DC-3's cargo space. The aircraft would be on the ground, in Moscow, overnight and we were concerned that it might be searched, the exposed film confiscated, and our pilots [might be] in deep trouble.

Those concerns proved unfounded. The camera's film, developed in the station's photo lab, showed what were later identified as the first-ever pictures of the Soviets' first supersonic fighter, two prototypes of the MiG-21. It entered service in the Soviet air force in 1959, just a few months after our collection bonanza.

Sometime later, the aircraft was given the NATO designation Fishbed. Eventually, the Soviets sold many production models to their socialist allies and it became the fighter aircraft of choice for those countries.

This story was published in 2013 as part of my autobiography, after having been thoroughly vetted, prepublication, by the CIA.

John Sager
Mercer Island, Wash.

Whose Heroics?

The statement in ["Namesakes: Carswell," October, p. 76] that a solo B-24 sank a Japanese cruiser in the South China Sea Oct. 15, 1944, needs re-checking. Forty Japanese cruisers were sunk in WWII; in no instance is there any relationship to the South China Sea on Oct. 15, 1944.

Could the ship sunk have been a destroyer? A. J. Watts, in *Japanese Warships of World War II* (published in the US by Doubleday & Co. in 1967) lists 146 Japanese destroyers, destroyer escorts, and fleet torpedo boats sunk in WWII, with dates of sinking. By date, the only possibility from the list is the fleet torpedo boat *Hato*, which according to Watts, was sunk Oct. 16, 1944.

Hato and its sister ships were 289 feet long and 840 tons, with speed up to 30.5 knots. They were armed with three 4.7-inch guns, one 7.7 mm anti-aircraft gun, and three 21-inch torpedoes. The closest US Navy counterpart was the

DE (destroyer escort). The Japanese fleet torpedo boats were quite different from US PT (Patrol Torpedo) boats, which were 70-80 foot, 35-48 ton motor boats.

According to the Internet website Long Lancers of Allyn D. Nevitt, *Hato* had escorted a convoy into Hong Kong Oct. 8, 1944; Nevitt's next entry is: "15-16 October: Departed Hong Kong. Sunk: by aircraft of TF 38, 130 miles ESE of Hong Kong (21-45N, 116-30E)." TF 38 was a US Navy Task Force; the aircraft would have been single-engine Navy aircraft carrier planes.

It would be valuable for historical accuracy if your historians could check primary data (USAAF, USN, Imperial Japanese Navy) and determine what actually happened.

Saran Jonas
New York City

■ *The information on Capt. Horace Carswell's Oct. 15, 1944, mission was from his Distinguished Service Cross citation synopsis, available at <http://valor.militarytimes.com>.—THE EDITORS*

I enjoyed the recent *Air Force Magazine* October "Namesakes" article about Horace Meek Hickam.

I would like to point out one error, however. For "college" you listed University of Indiana. I'm sure that the native Hoosier Lieutenant Colonel Hickam would be the first to point out that the proper name of the university is Indiana University.

Lt. Col. Robert L. Karpinski,
USAFR (Ret.)
Bloomington, Ind.

Thanks for the very well written history of Hickam, the cavalry convert, in your "Namesakes" series. It was extremely educational and I do enjoy learning about the namesakes of our bases around the world. One point I might [make] is: Your series and historical significance are the very reason we should abandon the term "joint base," or JB. Using the term JB and hyphenating two (or more) base names detracts from the colorful history and the respect for those for whom those bases were named. I would urge all to write their congressmen/women to get this absurdity removed. It should be Hickam AFB, Langley AFB, etc., not JB Pearl Harbor-Hickam or JB Langley-Eustis. Although they may be jointly managed, they are still geographically separated and should reflect our proud heritage. The only place I wish to see JB is on



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the tails of F-105Gs stationed at Korat RTAFB during the Vietnam War.

Many thanks for a great magazine!

Col. Frank Alfiter,
USAF (Ret.)
Beavercreek, Ohio

A Mighty Wind

The article concerning the wind damage to B-36s at Carswell AFB mentioned that there have been other such incidents, but mostly to small aircraft ["The Carswell B-36 Disaster," October, p. 62]. One of these occurred, also in Texas, in the late spring or summer of 1958, but to what would be called large aircraft.

The 4th Strategic Support Squadron (SAC) was based at Dyess AFB, flying C-124C Globemasters. One stormy night one or more big thunderstorms floated over the base and generated high winds that severely damaged the control surfaces of every plane in that squadron, except one that was away on a mission. Apparently, there was a strong wind shift of 180 degrees within a few minutes. This caused the control surfaces on the "Shakeys" to overcome their hydraulic buffering systems that kept them semirigid when parked. This resulted in a few weeks of repair work, 24/7, by both squadron personnel and workers from Kelly AFB. The unit had to go off the war plan, and only the weather office's recorded, unpredictable wind speeds and headings saved the squadron CO his job.

Henceforth after that affair, every time strong winds were forecast, usually at night, lieutenant copilots (like myself) hustled out to the planes, cranked up the inboards, and taxied into the forecast winds. Mechanical control locks were devised and used also, which kept the moveable surfaces totally rigid. Whether or not this incident involved a microburst is unknown, but it certainly did show what winds can do to big aircraft.

Lt. Col. William L. Farrar,
USAF (Ret.)
Kansas City, Mo.

I was there!

In August 1952 I was recalled to Active Duty to be upgraded from a B-29 flight engineer to flight engineer on B-36s.

I lived in the Capehart housing (off base) that backed up to the east overrun of Carswell AFB. A group of officers were having a conversation when we noticed a storm approaching from the south and heavy rain ensuing. I closed the garage door and went into my quarters. Shortly, the wind and rain subsided and many of

us resumed our conversations. It was strange, after the wind and rain that had been so intense, to find the weather so calm! Shortly, the weather became as intense as it had been previously.

As we were on alert daily, we got a call from our team to return to the base immediately. Not knowing what had taken place on the base, I was surprised when I checked in to the flight line that a tail of a B-36 was overhead. It didn't take long before we were told of the devastation that had taken place. We were paired and assigned to specific areas of the flight line to patrol. It was strange, standing on the flight line and hearing parts of aircraft metal scraping as they were blown along the ramp.

The next morning we could see all of the damage that was done the night before. One B-36 was literally picked up and turned 180 degrees and placed between two buildings on the ramp. It was not damaged, as far as I could tell, but there was no way to remove it from where it was except to cut the tail off! Another picture that I saw was of a hangar door with a sliver of wood penetrating through the metal door. A transit P-51 was wrapped around the base of the control tower.

Our crew was scheduled to receive the next B-36 from the factory. It went to another crew.

Microburst, I know nothing about, but at the time of the devastation, I could say the "eye" of a tornado passed over our area.

I went on to become a first flight engineer in the 42nd Bomb Wing at Loring AFB (was Limestone), Maine, for three-and-a-half years.

Maj. Brooks W. Lovelace Jr.,
USAF (Ret.)
Hahira, Ga.

You Oughta Know

In the October issue Mr. Correll references the world record for horizontal flight as 85,135 feet set by an SR-71 in 1965 ["Air and Space and Aerospace," p. 56]. This record was set in July 1976 by Capt. [Robert C.] Helt and Maj. [Larry A.] Elliott. The previous record was held by the YF-12A. I was the RSO (reconnaissance systems officer) on the record SR-71 flight.

Col. Larry A. Elliott,
USAF (Ret.)
Woodbridge, Va.

What About the Guard?

In the September issue of *Air Force Magazine* I noted Lt. Gen. L. Scott Rice,

director of the Air National Guard, is a member of the Air Staff ["Photochart of Air Force Leadership," September, p. 72]. Also on p. 77, I noted that the Air Force Reserve is listed as a major command. What happened to the Air National Guard as a major command? As a former commander of the 157th Air Refueling Wing at Pease Air Force Base, retiring in 1986, I would hate to think the Air National Guard, with its state affiliation, had been absorbed by the Air Force. If so, a huge mistake!

Col. Robert C. Lilljedahl,
USAF (Ret.)

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