



Fist of the Fleet Association

a non profit 501 (c) (19) military organization

NEWSLETTER

April 2019

Preserving the Past Providing for Today
Promoting the Future

SPRING EDITION

By: Jerry "Ricochet" Fritze

At the end of the Jan Newsletter I had said " Well, hopefully no more polar blasts or big snow this year." Kiss. Of. Death. Not only did we get additional frigid air masses we also got our entire annual snowfall of appx. 54" in the month of Feb. The overnight temps struggled mightily to get above freezing thru Apr 19th, and now as I write this on the morning of the 28th we just concluded a Winter Storm Watch and got 5" of snow. This type of snow event is unusual but not unheard of. Back in May of '04 I was out raking on what was supposed to be a mild Spring Saturday when a blast of polar air came screaming out of Canada and dropped about 4" of snow, which caught *everyone* by surprise. Well, it's days like this that makes the Southwest start to look better and better.

Somewhere out at sea there are a whole bunch of folks that don't have to worry about snow, or cold, or raking leaves. The Fist departed Norfolk Naval Station Apr 1st with CVW-7 aboard USS Lincoln (CVN-72) and Carrier Strike Group 12. At the end of this cruise Lincoln will arrive at her new new home port of San Diego, so no more of this cross-country junk. That might be good for the old log book but it's a hell of a logistical nightmare for a squadron, any squadron. And, it's expensive. Don't forget Murphy's Law. (As a refresher it states" Anything that *can* go wrong *will* go wrong.") How many times did we make that run from Lemoore to the boat in our own vehicles, usually finding a place to crash in LA for the night and then reporting aboard the next day hung-over as hell and thrown straight in to a working party on-loading the squadrons' gear, only to spend the next couple of weeks idling around the cold coastal waters off Southern California running to one drill after another. Busy days.

The Navy used to be fairly tight-lipped about ship movements but it is *expected* Lincoln will circumnavigate the globe to reach the West Coast, so, through the Med and Canal and then across the I.O., through the Straits of Malacca and on to the South China Sea. And then who knows where from that point as there are so many great ports of call. For all the old Fisties from the '76 cruise remember all the *fun* we had in the I.O. during the Entebbe crisis? Summer on the flight deck under the equatorial sun! We probably lost a dozen footballs and Frisbees off the deck and into the drink trying to stop from going insane from boredom, and night didn't really bring that much relief. Star Trek reruns on KRAN and B movies on the forward hanger deck. But, that's how it was, and we rely on VFA-25 to tell us how it is now. As they get deeper in to this cruise we wish them well, and hope and pray for their safety in whatever duty awaits them.

Until June:

Later!

~Ricochet~



USS Lincoln (CVN-72), outward bound

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

Mission Statement

Perpetuate the history of Naval Aviation Squadrons VT-17, VA-6B, VA-65, VA-25 and VFA-25, Remember deceased veterans and comfort their survivors, Conduct charitable and educational programs, Foster and participate in activities of patriotic nature, Assist current active squadron members, and Provide assistance to family members in times of emergency.

www.fistofthefleet.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

April 4, 2019 was a beautiful spring day at the height of the Washington, D.C. Cherry Blossom festival as members of former Skipper Pete Ogle's family and former Fist squadron mates gathered at Arlington National Cemetery for his interment. Along with his lovely wife Joanie and other close family members, former squadron mates Bob Nutwell, Nick Johnson, Chuck Webster and I represented the association as we bid farewell to our former skipper. The ceremony was conducted in a well-orchestrated, military manner complete with a horse drawn caisson, platoon size honor guard, 30 piece band and 21 gun salute. It was a truly moving experience in a solemn and historic setting. Following the interment, members of the party gathered for a reception and swapped stories about Skipper Pete and our '76 Westpac Cruise under his leadership.

The heavy winter weather has abated and air show season is quickly approaching. With that theme, I'll remind you that the A-7 Corsair II Association is holding a Spring Rendezvous in Pensacola, FL during May 6-7, 2019 with over 65 members planning to attend. And if you can't make that event, the EAA AirVenture in Oshkosh, WI is scheduled for July 22-28, 2019 as they celebrate the "Year of the Fighter" and the 50th Anniversary of Apollo 11 with Astronaut Michael Collins in attendance.

Finally, Hook '19 and the Reno Air Races are set for early September in Reno, NV. As you know, we plan to stage the Fist 2020 Reunion to coincide with Hook '20 and the squadron's return from deployment, and I look forward to a terrific week of events and seeing old friends.

So until next time, take care and keep the squadron in your thoughts as they step out to the pointy edge of the sword for a safe and speedy 2019 deployment.

Best Regards,
CHALKS



The "Unlimited Class" F-8F-2
Rare Bear



Fly Fast, Fly Low, Turn Left

OFFICERS

President: John Chalker

7802 Glenwild Drive

Park City UT

Cell 619-922-4207

Email jchalker@lmcapital.com

Vice President: John Leslie

205 Bluebird Lane

Saint Augustine FL 32080

Tel 904-233-4712

Email leslie_john@bellsouth.net

Secretary: Tom Vaughn

11302 Hwy 84 Unit 10

Shallowater TX 79363

Tel 806-928-7559

Email vaughntv@sptc.net

Treasurer, CFO: Chuck Webster

2441 Lock B Road North

Clarksville TN 37043

Tel 605-380-5827

Email cwebster@nretv.com

Sergeant at Arms/PR: Bob Schreiber

949 Crystal Park Blvd.

Clifford Township PA 18407

Tel: 570-780-4356

Email robert.a.schreiber@echoes.net

Member at Large: Al Gorthy

9134 W 131st Pl

Overland Park KS 66213

913-681-9026

Email algorthy@gmail.com



Blue Tour Dates

May 4/5 Ford Lauderdale Air Show, FL
 May 11/12 JB Andrews Air Show, MD
 May 18/19 Cape Girardeau Regional Air Festival, MO
 May 22 USN Academy Air Show, MD
 May 24 USN Academy Graduation Flyover, MD
 May 25/26 Miami Beach Air & Sea Show, FL

Jun 1/2 Star Spangled Salute Air Show Tinker AFB OK
 Jun 8/9 Great Tennessee Air Show Smyrna TN
 Jun 15/16 Ocean City Airshow MD
 Jun 29/30 Quad City Air Show Davenport IA

Jul 6/7 KC Downtown Air Show MO
 Jul 13 Pensacola Beach Airshow FL
 Jul 20/21 Duluth Air Show and Aviation Expo MN
 Jul 27/28 Grand Junction Air Show CO

SKIPPER'S CORNER

To kick off the new year the Fist of the Fleet continued their success on our Composite Unit Training Exercise (COMPTUEX) onboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). Everyone in the command rose to the challenge to train like we fight as we got sets and reps to prepare ourselves for the upcoming scenarios we will face on deployment. The tough work put into workups did not go unnoticed. The squadron has taken great pride in celebrating three big awards highlighting the wonderful accomplishments over the past year: The Scott F. Kirby Award for proficiency, professionalism and safety in ordnance handling and delivery. The COMNAVAIRPAC Boola Boola Award for effectively employing air-to-air weaponry, and the CVW-7 Top Hook for excellence in carrier arrested landings during the TSTA/COMPTUEX line period. In the words of former Skipper Chris "Meat" Dentzer: "DAMN PROUD!"

We now find ourselves a month into deployment and through one port visit to Palma de Majorca, Spain. The Spanish welcomed us with open arms as we continued our Sixth Fleet mission of engagement. The Mediterranean shoreline provided a picturesque background for great seafood and relaxation. The Fist of the Fleet and the Freedom Team of Air Wing SEVEN have been told to "be flexible" to go where ever the mission calls us. I do hope that some more great port visits are part of that mission.

I am thoroughly impressed by our grit and positive attitude looking forward. I have personally talked with the entire command to give my vision and guidance for the upcoming year while on deployment. My message was a simple one: "Better Yourself, to Better Your Team, to Better the Navy" I challenged the Fist of the Fleet to become the most qualified squadron in the Navy. If they keep bettering themselves every day, I believe we achieve this goal. The Fist of the Fleet is committed to making this world a safer place.

CDR David Dartez

Commanding Officer VFA-25



FROM THE COCKPIT: "Damn Proud to be a Fist Nugget" by LT Chris "FNG" Honeycutt

I successfully completed my initial F/A-18E training with the "Flying Eagles" of VFA-122 last December. During my 'patching ceremony', the event where new aviators learn of their first assignment in a fleet squadron, the junior officers had me convinced I was going VFR direct to a squadron in CVW-5, located in Japan. After an hour of watching my reaction, they came clean and celebrated the wonderful news - I would be joining the Fist of the Fleet! It was an exciting time to join, as the squadron was less than a month away from the start of COMPTUEX, the final work-up exercise before embarking aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) on our around-the-world cruise. Admittedly, I was nervous about my proficiency in the aircraft when compared to the combat hardened Fist pilots. Fortunately, I was welcomed into the fold and quickly found myself at the controls of a fleet ready F/A-18E Super Hornet equipped with all the combat systems. Before I knew it, we were ferrying the aircraft to NAS Oceana in Virginia Beach, VA in preparation for the fly-on. Luckily we had an evening together to enjoy a squadron dinner on the beach - where I was quickly indoctrinated to Fist traditions, including "scream singing" karaoke at Keagan's Irish Pub in Town Center.

While out to sea for a month of high tempo training I experienced my first taste of cyclic operations to include some of the more challenging aspects such as landing on a pitching deck. As a Squadron, we executed multiple preplanned long range strikes, and participated in war at sea exercises. It was impressive to see the Air Wing and Strike Group work together to gain proficiency and confidence. I was privileged to have my first date with the KC-135 refueling aircraft affectionately referred to as the 'Iron Maiden' on a beautiful IMC day while fighting off vertigo; only to go back and do it again later that night. As the only manual ball flyer, I bagged a handful of night traps inching my way ever closer towards being able to use the coveted Precision Landing Modes of the aircraft. Overall COMPTUEX was an eye opening experience that left me feeling excited for what was to come on deployment, and in desperate need to lose ten pounds I gained while enjoying midrats each evening with this amazing team.

Now, sitting at the helm of the SDO desk, as I sip high octane coffee to maintain a disconcerting caffeine-induced heart arrhythmia, I count down the days to our first port call of deployment - Palma de Mallorca, Spain. I carefully deliberate my largest task at hand today, picking tonight's Roll-em! All this as I reflect on how lucky I am to be in the best fighter squadron in the Navy. DAMN PROUD TO BE A FIST!



FROM THE HANGER DECK:

Hi, Fist of the Fleet Association, I am AO3 Neri. I was born in California, raised in the bay area as well as the central valley. I joined the Navy in March 2016 at age 24. I joined the military for the many opportunities the Navy has to offer. Joining me on my journey is my wife Dena Neri, a relentless, supportive woman that has been there for me every step of the way.

Being in VFA-25 as my first command, I have experienced many things to be grateful for. I have visited Hawaii, Key West and Whidbey Island. In September 2018, I was selected for the meritorious advancement program making me a Petty Officer Third Class. Joining the AO shop after working towards my plane captain qualification in the line shack, I was timid and wasn't sure if aviation ordnanceman was the rate for me. With the guidance of my Gunner, CWO2 Comrie and my previous LPO, AO1 McMillian, they both reassured me that this was the rate for me. Throughout my time as a Fist I have learned so much that I am already working toward my team leader qualification. I enjoy what I do on the flight line/ flight deck. Making sure ordnance gets loaded/downloaded safely and efficiently will remain as my job in the Navy. Not only am I proud to be an ordnanceman, I am damn proud to be a Fist. Once a Fist, always a Fist!



Photos from CVN 72 Media Department taken during COMPTUEX

Have you paid your 2019 Dues?

Annual Dues: \$25/YR

Life Time Dues \$200

Mail dues to Financial Officer:

Chuck Webster 2441 Lock B Road North Clarksville TN 37043

Only Voting Members receive a copy of the Directory

Become a Voting Member!

Visit the Base Exchange at

www.fistofthefleet.org

FOR SPECIAL MENTION AND RECOGNITION:

Name: Calli Zimmerman

Hometown: San Jose, CA

Date joined VFA-25: Nov 9, 2016

Why I joined the Navy:

I joined the Navy because of 9/11. My dad was a C-130 pilot in the Air National Guard at Moffet Field, CA. When 9/11 happened I knew I wanted to either join the service or law enforcement.

What inspired you to fly jets:

The appeal of jets as a kid going to airshows always left me speechless. Seeing the Blue Angels was the one thing I always looked forward to. It wasn't until my dad bought his own plane that I fell in love with flying itself and decided right then and there I wanted to be the best pilot and fly the best aircraft out there.

Favorite memory in VFA-25:

My favorite memory in 25 was the 75th anniversary celebration. I was a newer pilot in the squadron and I wanted to be in the flyover for the celebration. I never thought I would get to be in the flyover being such a junior pilot, but in the end I was able to do it. The flyover was such a moving experience for me. The ability to see how my sailors look up to me after that moment was something special.

Career aspirations:

I knew from my first flight in primary that I wanted to be an instructor pilot. Then on to advanced, I flew my first pass focusing on none other than meatball, line up, AOA and I was hooked! I knew then I wanted to be a paddles! Looking forward, instructor pilot in the RAG while being an awesome paddles!

What it means to you to be the first female FIST:

It's amazing! Glad to be a leader and inspiration for those in my command and outside. Other than that, just trying to find ways to better myself as a pilot and a leader. As always, DAMN PROUD TO BE A FIST!

As always I take special pleasure in extending our THANKS! to the out-going PAO: LT Gerald "Soul Patch" Anderson. Again, exemplary work in true Fist Fashion without which the Newsletter could not achieve its Mission Statement of *Preserving the Past, Promoting Today and Providing for the Future*.



Sailor, Aviator, Friend. Honoring Skipper Pete



Full platoon escort at interment site



Horse drawn caisson with Honor Guard escorting Pete Ogle to final resting place.

DID YOU KNOW: NAVY, MILITARY AND OTHER INFORMATION

Méndez Núñez (F-104) is an Álvaro de Bazán-class frigate of the Spanish Navy (*Armada Española*). She is the fourth ship of the class, entering service in 2006 and is named after the 19th century Spanish Rear Admiral Casto Méndez Núñez. Méndez Núñez took part in the previous USS Lincoln (CVN-72) COMPUTEX exercises. While in port in Norfolk, Sailors from CSG-12 and *Marineros y Marinas* from Méndez Núñez participated in a variety of events geared toward relationship-building and partnership, including training with EOD Mobile Unit Two, a wreath laying ceremony honoring fallen Spanish sailors from the Spanish American War, and a welcome reception. She rejoined CSG-12 as they entered the Mediterranean Sea and will sail as part of the group in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean, under the US 5th, 6th, 7th and 3rd Fleet commands.

The frigate is scheduled to conclude her deployment in October in San Diego, California, before returning home in November 2019. According to the Spanish Navy, this will be the fourth time for Spanish units to join the US Navy on similar deployments. In addition to Spain, Norwegian, Danish and German frigates spent time underway with US carrier strike groups in the past years.



Class and type: Álvaro de Bazán-class frigate

Displacement: 5,800 tons Length:481 ft Beam:161 ft Draft:15.6 ft

Propulsion: CODOG (Combined diesel or gas): 2 × General Electric LM2500 gas turbines, 2 × Navantia Caterpillar 3600 diesel engines. Speed: 28.5 knots Range: 4,500 nmi at 18 knots Complement: 250 (48 officers)

Sensors and processing systems:

Lockheed Martin AN/SPY-1D 3-D multifunction radar, Raytheon SPS-67(V)4 surface search radar, Raytheon DE1160 LF active and passive sonar, 2 × ARIES navigation/surface radar, 2 × Raytheon SPG-62 Mk99 radar illuminator

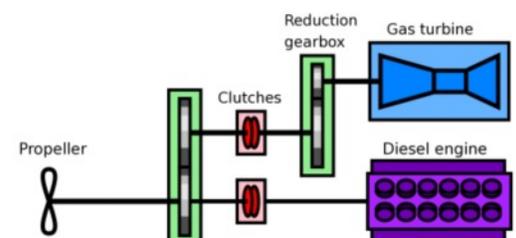
Electronic warfare & decoys:

4 × FMC SRBOC Mk36 flare launchers, SLQ-25A Enhanced Nixie torpedo countermeasures, Indra SLQ-380 EW suite, Indra Mk 9500 interceptor

Armament: 1 × 5-inch/54 Mk45 Mod 2 gun, Provision for one CIWS FABA 20mm/120 Meroka system, 1 × 48 cell Mk 41 vertical launch systems, 32 × Standard SM-2MR Block IIIA, 64 × RIM-162 Evolved Sea Sparrow Missile, 8 × McDonnell Douglas RGM-84 Harpoon anti-ship missile, 4 × 324 mm Mk32 Mod 9 double Torpedo launchers with 12 Honeywell Mk46 mod 5 Torpedoes.

Aircraft carried: 1 × Sikorsky SH-60B LAMPS III Seahawk

Combined diesel or gas (CODOG) is a type of propulsion system for ships that need a maximum speed that is considerably faster than their cruise speed, particularly warships like modern frigates or corvettes. For every propeller shaft there is one diesel engine for cruising speed and one geared gas turbine for high speed dashes. Both are connected to the shaft with clutches, only one system is driving the ship in contrast to CODAG-systems, which can use the combined power output of both. The advantage of CODOG is a simpler gearing compared to CODAG but it needs either more powerful or additional gas turbines to achieve the same maximum power output. The disadvantage of CODOG is that the fuel consumption at high speed is poor compared to CODAG.



GREEN TAILS OVER 'NAM: OPERATION LINEBACKER II

Operation Linebacker II was a US Seventh Air Force and US Navy Task Force 77 aerial bombing campaign, conducted against targets in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the final period of US involvement in the Vietnam War. The operation was conducted from 18 to 29 Dec 1972, leading to several informal names such as "The December Raids" and "The Christmas Bombings". Unlike the **Operation Rolling Thunder** and **Operation Linebacker** interdiction operations, **Linebacker II** was to be a "maximum effort" bombing campaign to "destroy major target complexes in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas, which could only be accomplished by B-52s". It saw the largest heavy bomber strikes launched by the US Air Force since the end of World War II. **Linebacker II** was a modified extension of the Operation Linebacker bombings conducted from May to October, when the emphasis of the new campaign shifted to attacks by B-52s rather than smaller tactical fighter aircraft.

On 8 Oct 1972, U.S. National Security Advisor Dr. Henry Kissinger and North Vietnamese Politburo member Le Duc Tho met in Paris to discuss new proposals by both nations, hoping to reach mutually agreeable terms for a peace settlement for the decade-old Vietnam War. Tho presented a new North Vietnamese plan which included proposals for a cease-fire, the withdrawal of American forces, and an exchange of prisoners of war. All three Vietnamese combatant governments—North Vietnam, the Republic of Vietnam, and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (PRG)—would remain intact, as would their separate armies. Hanoi no longer demanded that South Vietnamese president Nguyen Van Thieu be removed from office, the U.S. did not have to cease its aid to the southern government, and both Washington and Hanoi could continue to resupply their allies or forces on a parity basis. No new North Vietnamese forces were to be infiltrated from the north, and the U.S. agreed to extend post-war reconstruction assistance to North Vietnam.



Le Duc Tho

The new terms on the table also included the establishment of a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord, a loosely defined administrative structure which was to work toward general and local elections within South Vietnam. Political power would be shared by three groups: the Saigon government, the PRG, and a "third force" group to be mutually agreed upon by the other two parties. Since it was to work by consensus, nothing could be accomplished by the new council without the agreement of President Thieu.

When the two sides convened again on 17 Oct, there were two main areas of disagreement: the periodic replacement of South Vietnam's American weaponry and the release of political prisoners held by the Saigon government. The North Vietnamese had made significant modifications to their past negotiating position and were hurrying to get the agreement signed before Nov, believing that President Nixon would be more willing to make concessions before, rather than after, the upcoming presidential election. Although there were still some issues to be finalized, Kissinger was generally satisfied with the new terms and so notified Nixon, who gave his approval to the settlement. The finalized agreement was to be signed in Hanoi on 31 Oct.



Nguyen Van Thieu

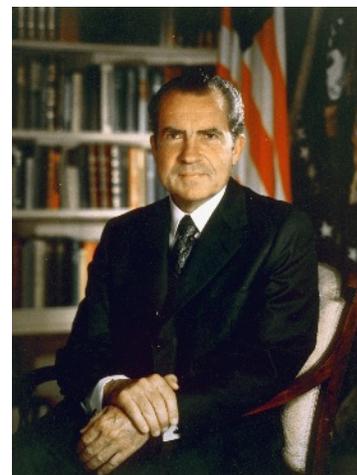
Kissinger then flew on to Saigon on the 18th to discuss the terms with Thieu. The South Vietnamese president was not happy with either the new agreement or with Kissinger, who he felt had betrayed him. Although Kissinger knew Thieu's negotiating position, he had not informed him of the changes made in Paris nor had his approval been sought. Kissinger "had negotiated on behalf of the South Vietnamese government provisions that he, Thieu, had already rejected". Thieu completely castigated the agreement and proposed 129 textual changes to the document. He went further, demanding that the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Vietnams be recognized as a true international border and not as a "provisional military demarcation line" (as had been stipulated in the Geneva Accords) and that South Vietnam be recognized as a sovereign state. The supreme irony, in the words of Stanley Karnow, had now arrived: "having fought a war to defend South Vietnam's independence, the United States was now denying its legitimacy."

Thieu then went one step further on 26 Oct, and publicly released an altered version of the text that made the South Vietnamese provisions look even worse than they actually were. The North Vietnamese leadership, believing that they had been hoodwinked by Kissinger, responded by broadcasting portions of the agreement that gave the impression that the agreement conformed to Washington and Saigon's objectives. Kissinger, hoping to both reassure the Communists of America's sincerity, and convince Thieu of the administration's dedication to a compromise, held a televised press conference at the White House during which he announced "we believe that peace is at hand."

On 20 Nov, the South Vietnamese revisions, and 44 additional changes demanded by Nixon, were presented to the North Vietnamese delegation by Kissinger. These new demands included: that the DMZ be accepted as a true international boundary; that a token withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops take place; that the North Vietnamese guarantee an Indochina-wide cease fire; and that a strong international peace-keeping force (the ICCS) be created for supervising and enforcing the cease-fire.



Henry Kissinger



Richard Nixon

Once the North Vietnamese read the new demands, they began to retract their own concessions and wanted to bargain anew, leading Kissinger to proclaim that they were "stalling". The talks, scheduled to last ten days, ended on 13 Dec, with both parties agreeing to resume negotiations. Teams of experts from each side met to discuss technicalities and protocols on 14 Dec, during which time the North Vietnamese representatives submitted a Vietnamese-language text of the protocol on prisoners containing several important changes that Hanoi had failed to gain in the main negotiating sessions. At a subsequent meeting of experts on 16 Dec, the North Vietnamese side "stone-walled from beginning to end". The talks broke down that day, and the Hanoi negotiators refused to set a date for the resumption of negotiations.

Nixon was now working against a January deadline. Kissinger's "peace is at hand" statement had raised expectations of a settlement among the US population. Even weightier on the President's mind was the fact that the new 93rd Congress would go into session on 3 Jan, and the President feared that the heavily Democratic legislative branch would preempt his pledge of "peace with honor" by legislating an end to the war.

Also prompting the President toward some form of rapid offensive action was the cost of the force mobilization that had accompanied Operation Linebacker. The additional aircraft and personnel assigned to Southeast Asia for the operation was straining the Pentagon's budget. The cost of maintaining this "augmentation force" totaled over \$4 billion by mid-autumn and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird insisted that the President request a supplementary defense appropriation from Congress to pay for it. Nixon and Kissinger were convinced that the legislative branch "would seize the opportunity to simply write the United States out of the war".



Melvin Laird



James McCarthy

After returning from Paris on 14 Dec, and after consultations with Nixon, Kissinger fired off an ultimatum to Hanoi, threatening "grave consequences" if North Vietnam did not return to the negotiating table within 72 hours. On that day, Nixon ordered the reseeded of North Vietnamese ports with air-dropped naval mines and that the Joint Chiefs of Staff direct the Air Force to begin planning for a bombing campaign (a three-day "maximum effort" operation) which was to begin within 72 hours. Two days after the 16 Dec deadline had passed, the U.S. bombed Hanoi. Senior Air Force officers James R. McCarthy and George B. Allison stated years later that the operation had been mainly politically driven, as a negotiation tool to "bring the point home".

Many historians of the Vietnam War follow the lead of President Nixon, who claimed that Hanoi's representatives had walked out of the talks, refusing to continue the negotiations. Both sides had proclaimed their willingness to continue the talks; however, Hanoi's negotiators refused to set a date, preferring to wait for the incoming Congress. The goal of President Nixon was not to convince Hanoi, but to convince Saigon.

President Thieu had to be assured that "whatever the formal wording of the cease-fire agreement, he could count on Nixon to come to the defense of South Vietnam if the North broke the cease-fire."

In the wake of **Operation Linebacker**, the U.S. had a force of 207 B-52 bombers available for use in Southeast Asia. A total of 54 bombers (all B-52Ds) were based at U-Tapao RTAFB, Thailand, while 153 were based at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam (55 B-52Ds and 98 B-52Gs). This deployment, however, utilized nearly half of the Air Force's manned bomber fleet, and Strategic Air Command (SAC) commanders were initially reluctant to risk the expensive aircraft and their highly trained crews in such an operation; in addition, the production line for B-52s had long since been shut down, and losses could not be replaced. The use of large numbers of B-52s was unprecedented in the war and the proposed large-scale attacks on targets within 10 nautical miles of Hanoi "represented a dynamic change in the employment of air resources". Many within SAC, however, welcomed the opportunity to fly into the heavily defended airspace of North Vietnam, hoping to finally prove the viability of manned bombers in a sophisticated Soviet-style air defense network of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), anti-aircraft artillery, and MiG interceptors. One purely local reason for utilizing the B-52s instead of tactical aircraft for the planned campaign was the September through May monsoon weather within North Vietnam, which made visual bombing operations by tactical fighter-bombers difficult. The B-52s were equipped with their own radar bomb navigation systems and supporting fighter-bombers would be able to strike targets with either the newly deployed laser-guided bombs (in clear weather) or by utilizing LORAN and radar-guided bombing systems.

The new operation, given the title Linebacker II, was marked by top-down planning by the SAC headquarters at Offutt AFB. Due to the restrictive time frame imposed by President Nixon (only three days) and the experience of **Linebacker** (in which North Vietnamese fighter aircraft had posed the highest threat to the bombers), SAC's plan called for all of the bombers to approach Hanoi at night in three distinct waves, each using identical approach paths and flying at the same altitude. The aircraft themselves were to fly in three-plane formations known as "cells" for more effective electronic warfare (EW) jamming coverage.

Once the aircraft had dropped their bombs, they were to execute what SAC termed "post-target turns" (PTT) to the west. These turns had two unfortunate consequences for the bombers: the B-52s would be turning into a strong headwind, slowing their ground speed by 100 knots and prolonging their stay in the target area and the PTT would point the emitter antennas of their EW systems away from the radars they were attempting to jam, degrading the effectiveness of the cells, as well as showing the largest radar cross-section to the missile guidance radars. The aircraft employed, however, had significantly different EW capabilities; the B-52G carried fewer jammers and put out appreciably less power than the B-52Ds, however they had more efficient engines and larger fuel tanks, hence they were assigned to longer range mission routes. Because of these factors, the campaign would ultimately be conducted in three distinct phases as tactics and plans were altered in response to losses to SAMs.

Source: wikipedia

NEXT TIME IN FISTORY: GREEN TAILS OVER 'NAM: THE AIR DEFENSES PART 1

VT-17

VA-6B

VA-65

VA-25

VFA-25

PAGE 8