

10 May 1972

Maj. Robert A. Lodge, serving as the flight leader with Capt. Roger C. Locher as his weapon systems officer, was involved in the initial engagement. The account of the victory is told for Major Lodge by Lt. Col. Wayne T. Frye:

Fifty miles south of Yen Bai Captain Locher held two separate hostile contacts on the nose at 40 miles. I then positioned my flight into modified fluid-four formation and set up for the impending engagement. The MIG's continued down the center of the scope and I accelerated to 1.4 Mach. Twenty nautical miles from the radar contact I began a **5'** wing-level climb and armed my missiles.

At 13 nautical miles the "in-range" light came on. I waited until the ASE circle began to contract and fired one AIM-7 at a range of 8 nautical miles at the leading MIG element. The missile came off the aircraft and began climbing at a 15-20' angle, tracking straight away. When the missile motor burned out, the missile detonated. I immediately fired the second AIM-7 at 6 nautical miles. It also came off and began climbing at a 20" angle, tracking straight away. The missile contrailed for about **5-8** seconds, and then I observed the missile detonation, followed immediately by a huge reddish-orange fireball. I could not see the MIG visually at this time. I continued my climb and **5** seconds later saw a MIG-21 with the left wing missing, trailing fire with pieces falling off, the aircraft out of control, pass 1,000 feet to the left side of my aircraft. The pilot had already ejected.

The flight then engaged the remainder of the flight of bandits. Colonel Frye signed Lodge's claim statement, because Lodge was shot down by a heat-seeking missile from one of the MIG's shortly after his successful engagement. Captain Locher, who was rescued 23 days later, described the loss of the F-4 after the enemy missile hit:

We immediately went out of control, flopping from side to side. Then fire started coming in the back of the cockpit. It seared my canopy with bubbles and I couldn't see out any more. The airplane slowed down and we went into a flat spin.

Locher ejected and came down in "a kind of deepdished valley." For the next 23 days he subsisted on fruit, nuts, berries, and water from banana trees. After his rescue he and other flight members reconstructed details of the 10 May engagement so that Lodge could **also** claim the destruction of an enemy aircraft.