

F-4J 155797 VF-92, USN, USS *Constellation*
Cdr Harry Lee Blackburn (POW - died)
Lt Stephen Anthony Rudloff (POW)

Later in the morning the Navy flew a second strike consisting of about 90 aircraft from the *Coral Sea*, *Constellation*, and *Kitty Hawk*. The target was Hai Duong, 30 miles east of Hanoi on the railway line to Haiphong where there was a railway yard, a POL storage site and a bridge. Cdr Blackburn and Lt Rudloff were flying as part of the CAP over the target. Just after the last of the strike aircraft left the target Cdr Blackburn's F-4 was hit in the tail by 85mm AAA. The engines failed, followed by the electrical power system and a fierce fire started to burn away the rear fuselage. Both crew were seen to eject and to land only about 100 yards apart. Lt Rudloff was temporarily blinded during the incident and was taken to the Hanoi Hilton but he had no further direct contact with his pilot. Stephen Rudloff, who was on his third tour of the war and his 295th combat mission, was released on 28 March 1973 and later became an F-14 Tomcat instructor pilot. Cdr Blackburn, the Squadron's executive officer, is presumed to have been killed either during or soon after capture. A report that Cdr Blackburn committed suicide by swallowing a cyanide pill circulated after the prisoners returned from Hanoi, but this seems fanciful and cannot be substantiated. His remains were returned to the USA on 10 April 1986.