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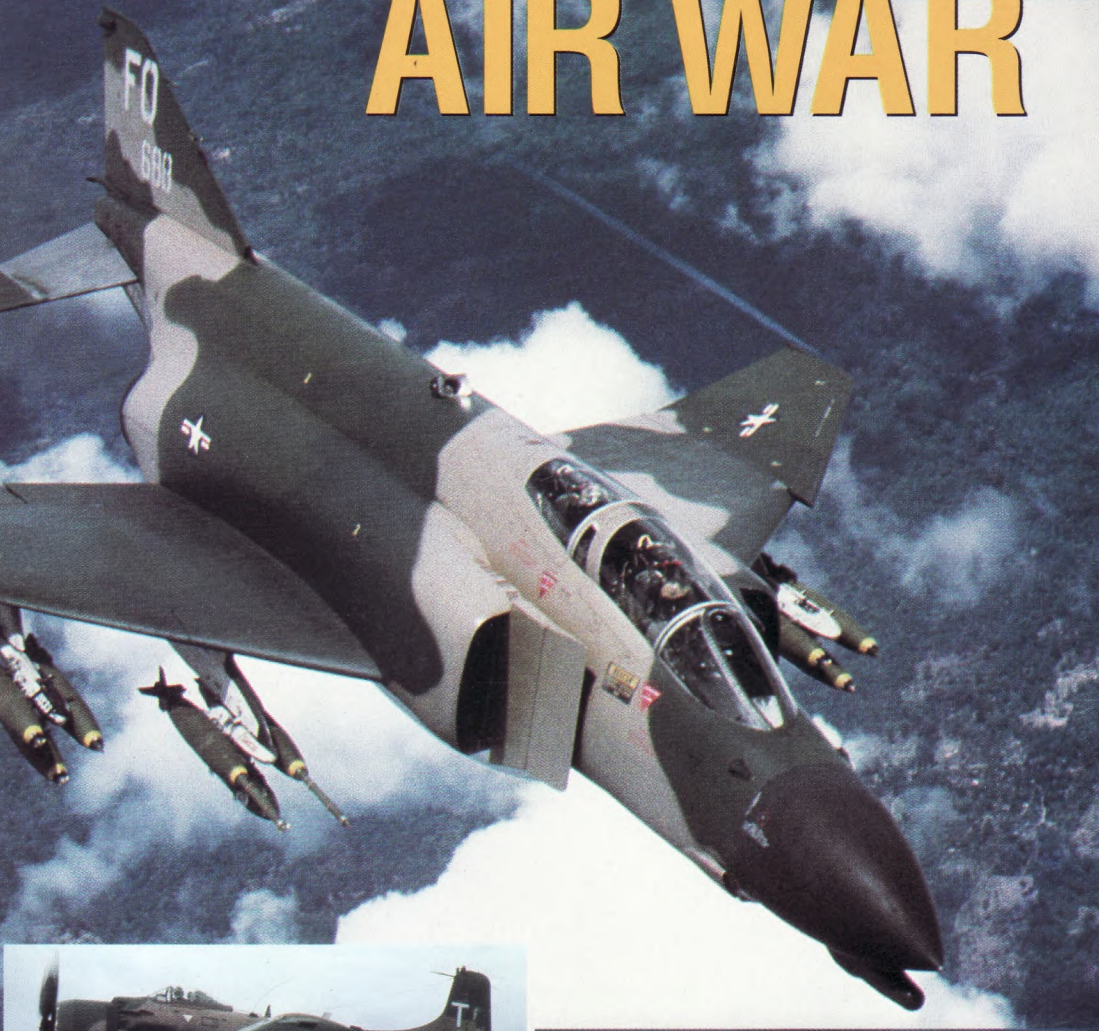
VIETNAM

AIR WAR

F-4
SHOOTDOWN

Raven
Sorties

DUST-OFF
OPERATIONS



Skyraider!

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF

FLIGHT
JOURNAL

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VIETNAM AIR WAR

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*On the cover: a 435TFS F-4 Phantom
heads to a target, May 1969 (photo
by James Wood, courtesy of
Warren Thompson).*



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A-7D SLUF

In any of its variations, the A-7 has never been thought pretty; in fact, it had barely landed in Vietnam when its unique appearance earned it the nickname "SLUF," which stood for "short little ugly fella." The A-7D may best be described as a heavy-ordnance carrier, long-legged, close-air-support fighter/bomber. When armed with 1,000 rounds of ammo and eight Mk. 82 bombs, its external fuel tanks gave it a combat radius of 480 nautical miles.

Ugly or not, during the Vietnam conflict, it really carried the war to the enemy, and the USAF relied on it. On October 16, 1972, the 354th TFW flew the first missions out of Korat. Owing to the impressive record the A-7D established early on, it quickly became the weapon of choice among forward air controllers who needed to pound a target they had spotted. But its destiny lay in the search-and-rescue, or "Sandy," missions.

During its first 10 weeks of combat, the 354th averaged 62 missions a day and suffered an astoundingly low loss

of only 0.03 percent. The lion's share of these missions was the task of the 3rd Tactical Fighter Squadron commanded by Lt. Col. Ed "Moose" Skowron. They escorted the big "Jolly Green" helicopters deep into enemy territory to rescue downed airmen.

Maj. Colin "Arnie" Clark spent more than nine hours orbiting an area in which an F-105 Wild Weasel crew had gone down. He logged one of the longest Sandy missions ever flown, and the crew were rescued—a feat for which Clark was awarded the Air Force Cross.

Before the A-7D's arrival in Vietnam, the A-1 Skyraider was the primary Sandy aircraft. By the early '70s, however, the A-1 was being phased out of inventory and turned over to the Vietnamese Air Force. The "short little ugly fella" was the perfect replacement. †

—Warren E. Thompson

Original Vietnam War color—
Photo by Ed Skowron; courtesy of
Warren E. Thompson.)



