

# 'Wild Weasles' Bomb

## Washington

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Pacific News Service

Forty-six times this year, F-105 fighter-bombers escorting B-52s over Laos have bombed surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites in North Vietnam on "limited duration protective reaction raids."

Carrying electronic gear which detects enemy radar and guides air-to-ground missiles to the target, these specially-equipped F-105s are known as the "Wild Weasels."

Less publicized than the raids themselves are the fighting men and researchers who labor to make them possible. Both in the military and industry, an organized fraternity of men has grown up around the "Wild Weasels."

Known as the "Society of Wild Weasels," this group holds annual conventions, sends out newsletters, displays the "Wild Weasel" emblem, and lives by the slogan "Cave Putorium" ("Beware the Weasel").

According to the Electronic Warfare magazine (published by the Association of Old Crows, the electronic warfare fraternity), the "Wild Weasel" concept was created in 1965 by a United States Air Force task force, at the specific request of the Air Force chief of staff. The task force studied the threat posed by North Vietnamese SAMs.

According to Electronic

Warfare, "the task force made many recommendations; but among its best was one to equip F-105 aircraft with special equipment to seek out and destroy the deadly SAM. This was the birth of the Wild 'Willie' Weasel."

The Weasel has been extensively used over North Vietnam. According to Electronic Warfare, "their (the Weasels') effectiveness turned the tide and the scope of the air war expanded."

Today the Wild Weasel is in its third generation of production. Used aboard the

F-105 fighter-bomber in conjunction with the Shrike missile, the Wild Weasel is now regularly called on to "protect" B-52 raids over Laos as well as to "react" against North Vietnam.

While most information about the Wild Weasel is closely guarded, it is known that the Air Force is concerned about certain "deficiencies" and "problems" in the Weasel.

Last January, Air Force Colonel Gary Willard gave a talk on the Weasel at the Stanford Research Institute. This classified briefing — of-

ficially a meeting of the Golden Gate chapter of the Association of Old Crows — included researchers from the Applied Technology Division of Itek, in Palo Alto, the prime contractor for the electronic equipment in the Weasel. Experts discussed one of the main problems of the Weasel: unless development continues at a rapid pace, the enemy quickly develops electronic counter-measures.

However, the engineers and scientists who created and constantly improve the Wild Weasel are not the only

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select group associated with it. Expert pilots and experienced electronic warfare officers (EWOs) are crucial to its success. According to Electronic Warfare an EWO needs more than experience and expertise. He needs "something special. This something consists of being a fighter-pilot-at-heart, a tiger, a human computer, and of being willing to bet his life on his ability."

To train such men, the "Willie Weasel College," headed by "Dean" (Colonel) Willard, was founded in 1966 at Nellis Air Force Base in

Nevada. Most information on the training is classified, but it is known that crews are trained specifically for the air war in Indochina. To get a full "Doctor's Degree" (in the form of a shoulder patch) from Weasel College, a team must complete 100 missions over North Vietnam.

According to Electronic Warfare, the Society of Wild Weasels is like an alumni association to the Weasel College, but its well-attended convention-reunions are also advertised to the engineers who work on the Weasel's continuing development.