

Mickey Rountree

Turkey Kill Sortie



The Turkey Kill Sortie

Castle AFB, California 1974

The only time I was shot at, and HIT, in anger!

By Michael E. (Mickey) Rountree, LtCol USAF (Ret)

This is the only time I ever got hit by small arms fire in my 13 years of flying fighters. It happened in 1974, over the San Joaquin Valley of California. I was flying the F-106 out of the 84th Fighter Interceptor Squadron from Castle AFB, California on a routine daytime training sortie, single ship to do intercepts with a T-33 out over the water.

Just after takeoff the UHF radio failed, completely (that's the only radio the six had to talk on). So, I did what we were supposed to do, and headed for the designated area to go for holding. Not knowing if the problem might get worse over time, I decided to go "**burner and boards**" to burn off gas faster. I flew tight figure-8s at about 2,000ft for about 10-15 minutes, then headed back to the runway.

Landed and taxied without trouble.

After climbing out [of the aircraft], the ground crew told me I had a number of "dimples" under the right wing. Sure enough, there were about 10 dents under the right wing and elevon.

When I got back to the Ops building the Ops Officer met me to ask what happened. He had his hat in hand and was headed out to talk to a **turkey farmer**? Turns out that holding pattern was right over a large turkey farm, and the birds got totally spooked. Those dumb birds all crowded into a corner of their pen and trampled each other to death. 120 KBA!!!

The dimples under my wing were due to his shotgun, firing 00 buckshot – pretty good shooting considering I was doing about 350kts! (he was not amused by my airshow)!

The Government ended up paying market value for the turkeys, plus a significant clean up fee.

The jet was fine.