

F-106... How Fast at Low Altitude?

By Dan Haney

[There I was...] Osan AB Korea, 19 TASS/ OV-10s, 19'74. I'm Ops and my Ass't Ops is Jim 'Lobo' Wolf, an Edwards Test Pilot grad and former AMC Six [F-106] jock. BS'ing over a beer as I recall, I made a comment about the high speeds a Six would do down low compared to the Mig21 (prior to the 'J' model at least). Lobo came back with a comment that the Six wouldn't go SS [supersonic] at all down low due to the CG situation and/or the flight control pressures required, and he knew because he'd flown the TO curves! This floored me; I knew twice I'd gone SS and said so, once on TO on a scramble and once off a PACE/PEGE calibration mission with a scramble divert. Anybody figure this one out, who's wrong?

Lobo would fly flight profiles like a range mission; i.e., TO and climb out under Departure, get a clearance for release to the mission, climb some more, enter a designated airspace and get setup for his runs.

My first incident was a 'Gate' climb to 8K' (Wheel!) at 85 miles SW of Homestead, [48th FIS](#) on 5 min alert and single ship due to broken birds (this was one of the days the 'Cubans' out of Jose Marti were tapping the ADIZ as soon as we'd recover, just to piss us off I guess). Anyway, I just left the AB on and was doing 1.75M real quick, got the Max Maneuver light and went min AB and held that. Bogey was a bug-smasher, not a big threat, of course. But with adrenalin going in 'climb out' I also hit a tiny leftover waterspout cloud for fun just cuz it was there, about 5K', so skinny it wasn't the width of my wingspan. Big mistake, lots turbulence, lots warning lights, all eventually turned off.

2nd incident was about 7AM up by NAS Jax, again Homestead alert, me and the controllers half asleep when I got sent to Manual Control for a popup. By the time I was paired the target was SS at 1.5K' and I was crossing the coast inbound at about 1.4M, radar lock-on at 10 miles but no visual. Now everyone's wide awake and yelling a little. Bogey makes a hard right turn and climbs from in the weeds to traffic pattern attitude, all of a sudden overtake goes from 100 to about 400, it's a Vigilante getting an early return to home plate from a deployment and having fun. I pulled out of AB, yanked, and went over the traffic pattern just as I got subsonic, got the crew chief to fix the wires on the arm switch. Bet the folks in beach houses had a story that day, maybe broken windows since I was still diving a little.

Answer of course is 1st F feeding on the scramble, hadn't happened yet for me but for Lobo it always had by the time he started his range runs. And my PACE mission was about 1+30 into the flight with the drops fed out, plus 2nd F had occurred, no CG problem and no fuel to transfer when the burner lights. At least that's my theory, no problem SS in either situation. Hell of a bird, the 106.

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