

## Chapter 29

# Great Ideas That Didn't Work

**“All the pores of my skin were  
slamming shut.”**

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I MADE MY CONTRIBUTIONS to “Great Ideas that Didn’t Work”. I was the squadron rep to the Wing Weapons and Tactics Unit”. The unit was supposed to come up with better ways to kill the enemy. One of the lessons we thought we had learned was, we got the best results on the first pass before the Bad Guys had a chance to take cover, and we suffered the highest loss rates on the last pass; therefore, “Do it all on one pass”. I became the “One pass, haul ass advocate”. The problem was, some munitions fired forward (guns and rockets), some were dropped before we came over the target (bombs), and others were released directly over the target (the cluster bomb units I just described).

## GREAT IDEAS THAT DIDN'T WORK

The armament system had a feature which allowed each armament rack on the wings to be fired (or released) in a specific sequence. Each munition had a different gun sight setting. I sat down and figured this all out so that if everything worked, it was possible to fire guns and rockets first, release bombs prior to pullout and then release the CBU's directly over the target. The advantage was obvious to an old veteran like me; we would catch them before they could get under cover and using the CBU last, keep their heads down during our most vulnerable phase, the pull-out.

The new commander liked the idea, so he and I set out to try it. I supervised loading the munitions so they would all be on the proper wing stations, and off we went. What I didn't know was that there were a few new A-1s that had a different sequence set up in the armament selector system. Over the target I set up the gun sight and the sequence switches and rolled in. The guns fired just fine. When I hit the rocket switch, the CBU fell off the back early. When I hit the bomb switch the fuel tanks fell off; and when I hit the CBU switch during the pull-up, the rockets fired off into the distance. The commander came on the radio with a big laugh and said, "I've never seen anything so screwed up in my life!"

He and I had several memorable missions together. Several days after that comic weapons demo, he and I spotted a bunch of water buffalo on a river island. This was in an area where we needed permission from the CIA guys before we struck a target. He called them on the radio and described the critters as "military pack animals". They gave us the OK. Another time he described some small boats in that same river as "military cargo barges". They gave us the OK. Finally, one day he spotted a truck in a neutral area and described it as "carrying military equipment". They gave us the OK. We must have broken the code. If you called it "military", you could bomb it. His camera film later showed that the truck was carrying furniture.

These "Rules of Engagement" (telling us when we could strike) which we had to abide by, were pretty restrictive in some areas. In one area, we were not allowed to strike on Sundays. This was because the families "visited across the lines" on Sundays. In most areas we couldn't strike within three miles of any village.

One day we were out in such an area, and I could see dust rising up through the trees. This meant a truck was moving along a

## PLAGUED BY GOOD LUCK

road. When the driver came to a clearing, I could see a machine gun on the back of the truck, and the gunner was shooting at me. Before I could get into a position to shoot back, the truck ran into a village. I hung around for a while but he wouldn't come out. Finally I flew back over some hills to the south and waited for a while. This was cat and mouse. When I popped up over the hills I could see dust again, under the trees about five miles away, and I pounced on him. I have no idea whether I got him or not, but I laid everything I had where I thought he was.

Sometimes patience paid the right dividend. We were chasing more dust under the trees one day and couldn't get the source in sight for quite a while. We had to be careful in that area because there were sometimes friendlies around. Finally, as the truck came through a clearing, I got a look at it. It was white, and I would swear that it had "PEPSI" painted on its side; probably not a Bad Guy.



*Pave Pat propane bomb loaded on right  
"stub" of an A-1E... another "bright" idea.*

*(USAF Photo)*