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The Shootdown of Trigger 4

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Abstract: The official record shows that Cadillac, a flight of four F-4s on a MiG sweep mission over North Vietnam on 29 July 1972, engaged and shot down a MiG-21, a kill credited to Cadillac 1. Shortly thereafter, Pistol, a flight of four F-4s, escorting a **chaff** mission, engaged and shot down a second MiG-21. Almost immediately thereafter, a third MiG-21 shot down Trigger 4, one of a flight of four that was also escorting the **chaff** mission. However, research conducted at Air University over the past few years challenged the official record by suggesting that Trigger 4 was mistakenly shot down by Cadillac 1, who had misidentified the friendly F-4 as an enemy MiG-21. The goal of this Air Staff study, nicknamed Project Trigger, was to reconstruct the events of the air battle and resolve the discrepancy. Several areas comprise the body of evidence gathered to support Project Trigger: analysis of cockpit tape recordings; extensive interviews with aircrew that participated in the mission and others knowledgeable about the mission; review of archived documents, both classified and unclassified; and reconstruction of the air battle by means of computer programs designed to display the fight visually.

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