

# An Old Dog Bites Back.....

The following true story comes from Tom DeMarino - one of the US Navy's QF-86F pilots based at the Pacific Missile Test Center, Point Mugu during the mid-'eighties. Tom flew the QF-86F in both piloted and 'remote' configurations and the tale here describes a massed 'manned' sortie. Look out for my [QF-86 Book](#).

"We were asked to provide "force multipliers" along with VX-4 against a visiting F-15 USAF squadron. Their job was to defend a target on the coast, and ours was to get by them. During the brief, our "red forces" lead basically said, "do not



engage unless attacked, our goal is to reach the target". Then we sat in on the general briefing, led by an Air Force Colonel. He described all the rules of engagement, safety,

etc. as well as the boundaries of the good guy area (basically around Vandenberg AFB.) His last comment was to his people, saying, "I don't want to hear about any F-15's getting shot down by thirty-year-old airplanes." I think it rankled him a bit that we had a couple of "long hairs" flying

our airplanes. One of those long hairs was a retired fighter pilot, having flown F-8's and F-4's most of his career. Although one of the more undisciplined officers I had ever met, he was also one of the best air-to-air guys I had ever met, particularly in a one-on-one environment."

"As luck would have it, the F-15 guys figured the F-86's were underpowered sitting ducks, and let over-confidence get in the way. Instead of calling a missile shot, they decided to save their missile expenditures for more difficult targets and gun the Sabres. In order to do that, they had to slow down in order to get some tracking time. Starting with lower

energy [rather] than best turning speed probably would not have been a problem for one of the most powerful airplanes in the air. But then they made their second mistake. The F-86 guys picked them up fairly early and split left



and right. The F-15's decided to split as well and take them both instead of keeping section integrity. Now it was one-on-one. As they closed in on the F-86's for what they thought would be a fast kill, they learned how good an F-86 can turn, and they overshot, allowing the F-86's to neutralize the fight. The prudent thing to do at that point would be to hit burner and go straight up, something the F-86 could not do. Instead, ego took over, and they fought the Sabres on their own ground - a slow turning fight - and got their hat, ass, and overcoat handed to them."

"As the Sabre guys came into the debrief, the Colonel was somewhat rude and abrupt - "I don't have anything for you

guys, get outa here!" As they walked down the hall wondering what the problem was, they could hear the Colonel screaming at the top of his lungs, reaming his wayward pilots a new one for getting shot down by a "30 year old tin can with no missiles and no afterburner!" The targets guys just laughed. It wasn't the first time...."