

## **ALTUS, ROBERT WAYNE**

Name: Robert Wayne Altus

Rank/Branch: Captain (O3)/US Air Force

Unit: 4th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 366<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing, 7<sup>th</sup> AF, Da Nang AB, South Vietnam

Date of Birth: August 7, 1946

Home City of Record: Sheridan, Oregon

Date of Loss: November 23, 1971

Country of Loss: Laos

Loss Coordinates: 153500N 1065300E (YC058250)

Status (in 1971): Missing in Action

Aircraft: F4E

Other Personnel in Incident: 1LT William Phelps, Missing in Action

**SYNOPSIS:** The Phantom, used by Air Force, Marine and Navy air wings, served a multitude of functions including fighter-bomber and interceptor, photo and electronic surveillance. The two man aircraft was extremely fast (Mach 2), and had a long range (900 - 2300 miles, depending on stores and mission type). The F4 was also extremely maneuverable and handled well at low and high altitudes. The F4 was selected for a number of state-of-the-art electronics conversions, which improved radar intercept and computer bombing capabilities enormously. Most pilots considered it one of the "hottest" planes around.

Captain Robert W. Altus was the pilot and First Lieutenant William Phelps his weapons/systems operator when they departed Da Nang Airbase as part of a multi-aircraft flight on an operational mission over Laos on November 23, 1971. When the flight was about 20 miles northwest of Chavane in Saravane Province, Laos, a large explosion on the ground was seen by flight members. Efforts to raise Altus and Phelps by radio failed. No parachutes were seen, and no emergency radio beeper signals heard. Both Altus and Phelps were classified "Missing in Action."