

VIETNAM WAR'S TOP "ACE" VISITS MUSEUM OF AVIATION



PHOTO: Debellevue is interviewed by Middle Georgia news media by the Museum of Aviation's F-4D MiG "killer." The Vietnam "ace" may have flown the Museum's aircraft which was assigned to his unit in 1972 -- the 555th Tactical Fighter Squadron in Thailand.

Retired Colonel Charles Debellevue, the highest scoring "ace" of the Vietnam war toured the Museum of Aviation January 20. Debellevue was one of only five fighter pilots in Vietnam that were credited with more than five aerial victories to become

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The Colonel who now works as a Defense Logistics Agency Liaison at Oklahoma State University, spent three hours looking at Museum aircraft, exhibits and learning about the Museum's education programs. He took the controls of one of the Museum's *Mission Quest* flight simulators and autographed the simulator after his flight.

Following his tour, Middle Georgia news media interviewed him standing next to the Museum's F-4D, the same type aircraft he flew in Vietnam. Debellevue thought he may have flown the Museum's aircraft which was assigned to the 555th Tactical Fighter

Squadron at Udorn Royal Thailand Air Force Base at the same time Debellvue's flew with the unit. His aerial victories, however, came while flying other F-4Ds.

On May 10, 1972, Debellevue scored his first aerial victory by shooting down an enemy MiG 21 while flying as the back-seat Weapon Systems Officer with pilot Capt Steve Ritchie. He and Ritchie would go on to shoot down three more MiGs while flying together on July 8 and August 28. On September 9, 1972 DeBellevue became America's top "MiG Killer" when he and another pilot, Capt. John Madden, downed two more MiGs, giving Debellevue six in total, the most earned during the Vietnam War.

During his combat tour, DeBellevue logged 550 combat hours while flying 220 combat missions. His skill as a WSO was recognized when he and the other two U.S. Air Force aces, Ritchie and Capt. Jeff Feinstein, received the 1972 Mackay Trophy

DeBellevue retired with 30 years active duty service in 1998 as a full Colonel while serving as commander of [Air Force ROTC](#) Detachment 440 at the [University of Missouri](#) in January 1998 after 30 years of military service.

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