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JOURNAL OF CARRIER AVIATION



Summer 2024

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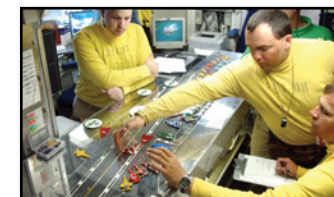
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Cover: *The VFA-27 Royal Maces CAG bird stands out against the mountains of Guam during a recent detachment.*

Photo: USN



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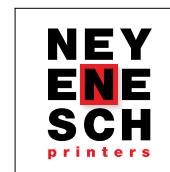
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Printing by Neyenesch Printers
San Diego, Calif.

Air Plan



VOLUME 52 NUMBER 2 Summer 2024
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Articles and news items are welcome. Submit material for *The Hook* to: Editorial Offices, *The Hook*, 9696 Businesspark Ave., San Diego, CA 92131-1643. (858) 689-9227 or (800) 322-HOOK, email: thookmagazine@gmail.com • website: <http://www.tailhook.net>
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BRIEF

Tailhook Nation, I hope this finds you well as we transition to the summer months. Our annual symposium is quickly approaching, and I am excited for our community to come together once again to celebrate our friendships, partnerships and combined mission. Our tactics, test, personnel and capabilities subject matter experts are ready to fill our panels and impart their wisdom as to how we are staying and working toward being ready. Things are shaping up to be a fabulous and informative week!

From the President

In our Integrated Air Dominance panel, weapons school instructors will discuss how we combine the capabilities of not only our Navy assets, but those of our sister services to bring the full might of the United States to bear. That high-end fight is enabled by our weapons systems and software, which are constantly evolving and pushing the envelope. Our Arming the Warfighter panel will focus on how we keep our tools relevant and ensure the fleet remains up to date and trained on the systems that give us the edge in combat.

MC3 Nicholas Rodriguez, USN

In addition, we are looking forward to hearing the sea stories of those just returning from deployment. Our From the Front Lines panel will discuss the challenges faced by Naval Aviation warfighters and how training prepared them for the real-world situations faced during months at sea across the globe.

With that, I hope to see you all at the Grand Sierra Resort in August. The opportunity to have all our members under one roof is an exciting prospect with the potential to make this the best Hook to date! Please join us in celebrating everything Tailhook aviation has to offer. See you in Reno!



CDR Kristen "Dragon" Findlay, USN



An F/A-18E Super Hornet assigned to the VFA-105 Gunslingers launches from USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) operating in the Red Sea to counter attacks on shipping by Houthi rebels, 20 Apr '24.

This issue of the magazine commemorates the 50th anniversary of the introduction of the S-3 Viking to fleet service with an updated article by LCDR Rich Burgess, USN(Ret) that first appeared in *The Hook* in 2008. Looking back to that time in 1974, it is interesting to read how a military correspondent characterized the new aircraft, calling it "a sophisticated fusion of aircraft, computer and sensory systems" with a mission of "destroying the best submarines of the '70s and '80s." To be sure, the *Viking* represented new technology and the Soviet submarines that were their quarry were advanced platforms. However, the mission was not new, the Navy having been seeking out and attacking enemy submarines since World War I. In short, it was not unprecedented.

From the Editor-in-Chief

But that is the title chosen by CVW-3 for their In Marshal submission to describe their headline-making operations against Houthi rebels, defending the carrier strike group and merchant shipping against a range of unmanned platforms. It is a battle without a blueprint, an unveiling of the future of air warfare.

What do the two have in common? It is the need to be ready, whether keeping pace with the emerging capabilities of a long-standing adversary or adapting to combat a new threat. Appropriately, this is the theme of Hook '24.

Traditionally, as the last issue of the magazine to go to print before the annual symposium, we have no shortage of content, which is always a good thing for Senior Editor Mark Aldrich and me. In addition to CVW-3's contribution referenced above, the reports from the fleet are wide-ranging,

packed with news of real-world activities interspersed with the humorous recounting of JOPA activities. The VFA-27 *Royal Macs* were among the first to submit this time around and they included a number of beautiful images from their recent detachment to Guam, one of which graces the cover.

In addition to the article on the *Hoover*, the Launch section line-up includes a submission from Doug Bohs about the rescue of Air Force F-105 *Thunderchief* pilot Capt Frank Tullo in North Vietnam, the *Fist of the Fleet* pilots who flew Rescue Combat Air Patrol over the recovery site and their reunion years later. On the occasion of the 55th anniversary of the VAW-126 *Seahawks*, LT Carly Courtney details her squadron's experiences with aerial refueling and its impact on the VAW community. As attendees at recent Tailhook symposiums have noticed, the National Naval Aviation Museum has displayed the flight jacket that belonged to CDR John "Bug" Roach, the namesake of the mixer that draws Naval Aviators from far and wide. The keeper of the jacket last year, Bonnie Towne, captures what it symbolizes about the man and the long shadows cast by the legendary figures that inspire the generations that have followed them.

This issue's An Airplane Story feature will prompt those who flew the "Big Fighter" to check their logbooks. And in remembrance of the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Philippine Sea, we hope you enjoy our On Deck article that draws from the diary of an SB2C *Helldiver* aircrewman recounting his flight against the enemy.



Dave Nenna



Hill Goodspeed



An F-35C Lightning II assigned to VMFA-311 pictured during a low-level training flight in the Sierras on 10 Apr '24. The newest Marine Corps squadron equipped with the JSF, the Tomcats' ranks over the years have included astronaut John Glenn and baseball slugger Ted Williams.



Osprey Nacelle Improvement: A Game Changer for Agile Combat

by Christopher "chet" Misner, Sr. Manager, Bell Strategic Pursuits

CMV-22B Ospreys assigned to the VRM-50 Sunhawks and VRM-30 Titans spotted on the flight deck of USS Nimitz (CVN 68) during operations in the Pacific Ocean on 12 Sep '23.

The V-22 Osprey has been and will continue to be one of the most sought-after aircraft by theater commanders, second only to intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets. As the nation's first operational military tilt-rotor, the V-22 provides commanders with mission flexibility to win in today's operating environment and in any future fight.

The Osprey's ability to take off and land vertically like a helicopter and fly horizontally like an airplane is transformational, providing our armed forces with unique capabilities that change how missions are accomplished. The aircraft's nacelles, capable of rotating 90 degrees to



A CMV-22B Osprey assigned to the VRM-50 Sunhawks pictured on the flight deck of USS Nimitz (CVN 68) operating in the Pacific Ocean on 12 Mar '22. The versatility and capabilities of the Osprey will be key in responding to any crisis in the far-flung reaches of the Indo-Pacific.

junction boxes. The effort led to successful re-engineering of more than 1,300 parts and using point-to-point wiring, making manufacturing more affordable and less time-consuming.

"Nearly sixty percent of all maintenance actions occur within the V-22's nacelle area, so the NI effort is designed to attack the highest reliability and readiness degraders while maximizing return on investment for the taxpayer," says Kurt Fuller, Bell senior vice president and V-22 program manager. The NI program was initiated with CV-22s, the U.S. Air Force's variant of the Osprey, and the modification has demonstrated consistently positive results.

Before NI modification, the average maintenance time dedicated to nacelles was more than 2.5 hours per flight hour. Twenty CV-22s have undergone the NI modification and with over 4,000 hours flown, those aircraft have required only 12 maintenance hours and not required any maintenance actions on the modified nacelles.

This has saved the Air Force over 10,000 total nacelle maintenance hours. Maintainability and reliability were key performance parameters in the new design to measure success, and the results have exceeded expectations. Delivering both short and long-term benefits to support the longevity of the fleet, the NI program provides immediate readiness advances that will continue to pay long-term dividends in availability and affordability.

The results seen by the Air Force will translate to the Navy CMV-22 and the Marine Corps MV-22. In the Indo-Pacific theater specifically, the increasing need for sea services to prepare for and execute expeditionary

advanced base operations and distributed maritime operations is exposing a vulnerable logistical capability gap. If deterrence fails and conflict occurs, naval commanders will have to resupply their forces over vast distances. This poses significant operational challenges where force structure does not match its combat logistics requirements.

In times of rapid response and crisis, commanders cannot spend as much time planning how to support the force as they do to employ it. The solution is to focus on fortifying the Osprey fleet now. Taking actions today to modernize and sustain the V-22 variants across the services will ensure that operational capabilities align with strategic imperatives.

The requirement to move forces and cargo between dispersed bases, forward logistic support sites and ships at sea will prioritize the need for a dedicated logistics connector. That connector must possess and demonstrate the speed, range and versatility that only tilt-rotor technology can provide. The V-22 is that valuable connector.

The strategic imperatives facing the Navy and Marine Corps, combined with the demonstrated, significant returns on investment in aircraft availability and affordability, make support for the NI program an imperative.

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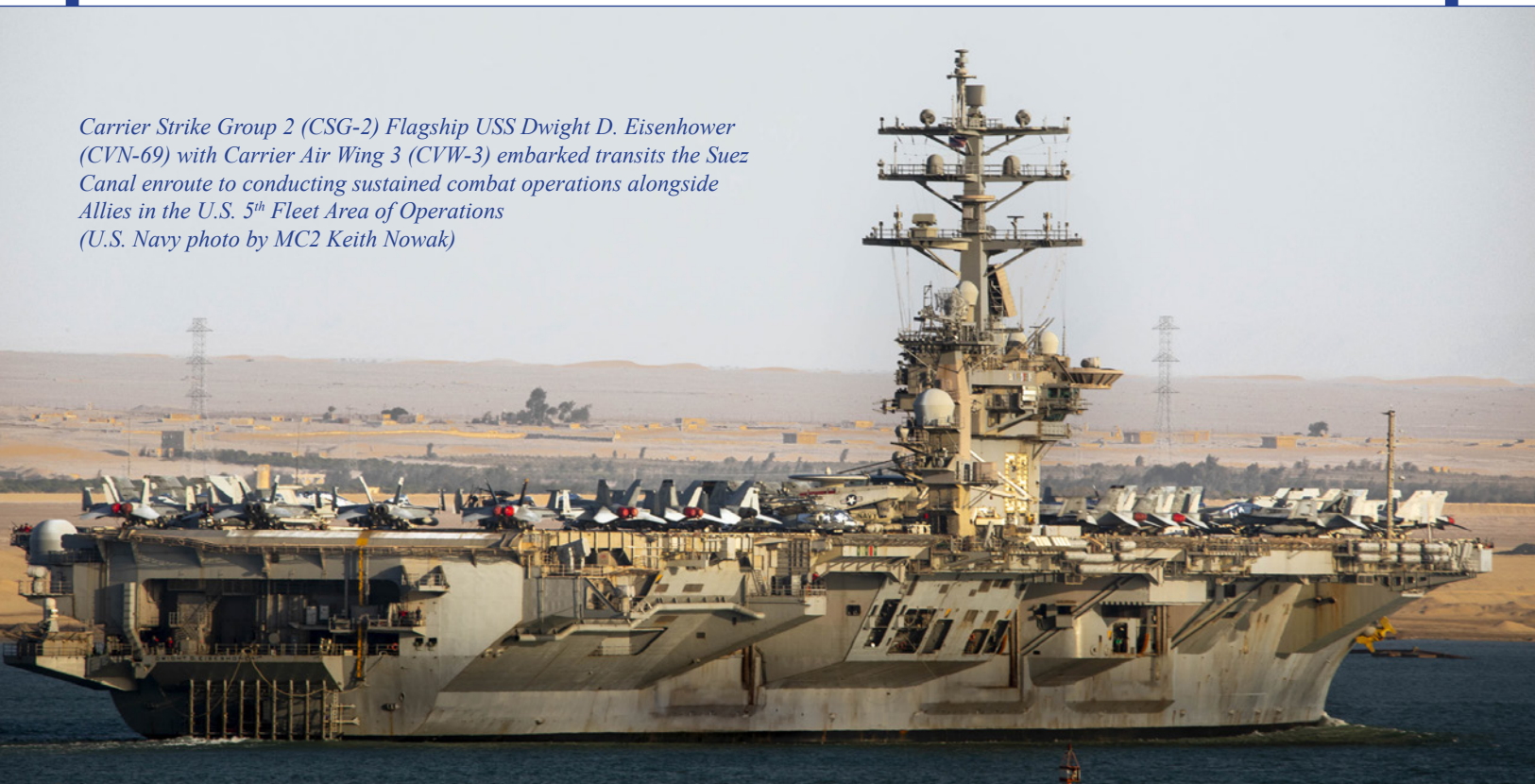
Crew chiefs from the 727th Special Operations Aircraft Maintenance Squadron conduct repairs on a CV-22 Osprey at Hurlburt Field, Fla, on 23 Mar '22. The Nacelle Improvement program has reduced the hours maintainers need to devote to the Osprey, increasing the mission availability of the tilt-rotor platform.



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Carrier Strike Group 2 (CSG-2) Flagship USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) with Carrier Air Wing 3 (CVW-3) embarked transits the Suez Canal enroute to conducting sustained combat operations alongside Allies in the U.S. 5th Fleet Area of Operations (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Keith Nowak)



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Greetings, Tailhook Nation! Your requirements officers and resource sponsors at OPNAV N98 remain resolute in our commitment to provide naval air combat power capable of securing decisive victories against adversaries. While advanced platforms, mission systems and next-generation weapons are essential, they comprise just one aspect of ensuring we are equipped to confront the challenges and intricacies of tomorrow’s battlefield. We are focused on achieving warfighter readiness through advanced integrated training that centers on cultivating skilled aviators prepared for the high-end fight. It is through this commitment to comprehensive training that Naval Aviation distinguishes itself and gains an edge over the competition.

From the Director, Air Warfare *Evolving Naval Aviation Training for Peak Warfighter Effectiveness*

by RADM Michael Donnelly, USN
Director, Air Warfare (OPNAV N98)

The landscape of Naval Aviation training is evolving rapidly and driven by a myriad of factors. These include airspace constraints, spectrum limitations, operational security concerns and the ever-evolving threat environment. Live-fly training will remain a cornerstone of our proficiency development while simulated and virtual training continue to improve at an exponential rate, providing ready-relevant competency evaluation and high-rate skills repetition at often lower risk and faster training development. In response, we must adapt and embrace innovative and complementary solutions to ensure our readiness and effectiveness in the air and across multiple domains remain unmatched.

Central to this adaptation is the expansion of our training capabilities within the synthetic environment. Here we find avenues to replicate realistic scenarios, integrate multidomain operations and hone our skills in a controlled setting. Synthetic Inject to Live (SITL) technologies such as Link Inject to Live (LITL) and Distributed Mission Training (DMT)

simulators offer us the flexibility to conduct high-end training exercises while overcoming the restraints of traditional live-fly operations.

Key to this transition is the Naval Continuous Training Environment (NCTE), which serves as the nexus for connecting Naval Aviations training platforms and simulations. Additionally, the Joint Simulation Environment (JSE) provides a high-fidelity, physics-based environment for immersive training experiences. To effectively operate as a cohesive team in combat, it is imperative that we have the opportunity to train in a unified and synthesized manner. Our focus remains to equip



RADM Michael Donnelly, USN elements of the carrier strike group with the necessary capabilities and training resources, allowing them to train collectively to operate effectively.

The synthetic environment offers us the flexibility to adapt our tactics and strategies to address evolving threats. The critical factor is to ensure that all components of the team can train together within a realistic threat environment. This guarantees that every member of the team is prepared to operate seamlessly in combat and when facing challenges in real-world situations.

However, as we embrace these advancements, we must not lose sight of the fundamentals that training inside a physical aircraft provides. *Decision-making under g-loading remains a critical skill that must be honed and maintained.* Acknowledging that truth, our training plan must prioritize warfighter proficiency, focusing on a performance-based approach that leverages technology-aided, adaptive learning. This approach ensures scalability across all levels of training — from individual skill development to integrated exercises — and extends to proficiency sustainment during at-sea operations. By embracing innovation and fostering a culture of continuous improvement, we will navigate the challenges ahead and emerge as a stronger, more capable force in Naval Aviation.

Our greatest driver that will deliver our successful training outcomes, of course, are the women and men who find themselves in the cockpits and supporting operations at sea. We will continue to support our warfighters in all that we do here. Thank you!



USN



Realistic training on the ground like this F/A-18 simulation of aerial refueling breeds more confidence for aircrew when challenged doing the real thing in the air.

Hook '24

As we celebrate our 68th year as an association, our carriers, platforms, tactics and tools continue to be variables of change and modernization while a single constant remains the same — the essence of the warfighter. This year's "Be Ready" theme, a focus on today's warfighter, will provide the perfect landscape to showcase such a constant as we gather with those who were in attendance over six decades ago, those attending for their very first time and everyone in between; at Hook we'll be linked by the carrier aviation warfighter constant.

From the Executive Director

Our president, CDR Kristen "Dragon" Findlay, has put together a robust agenda, including theme-based marquee panel sessions led by world-class moderators and panelists. Additionally, you will not want to miss other key briefs, the Air Boss' Flag Panel, spouse social, "Jig Dog" Ramage Awards Luncheon, winging ceremony and banquet. Speaking of warfighters, we are proud to announce that our Saturday night banquet guest speaker will be ADM Sam "Pappy" Paparo, Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.

Thanks to you, Hook '24 stands to be a record year. Having outgrown The Nugget, the Grand Sierra Resort (GSR) in Reno provides more exhibit space and guest room capacity. As I write this, we are on track to occupy every available room at the GSR, and our largest exhibit floor is completely sold out. Included in the new layout is an 8,000-square-foot venue that we will transform into the Tailhook Lounge and Bar. If it's been a while since you've been to Hook, make the decision to join us this year as we take our annual symposium to the next level with a larger venue and something to offer for everyone.

Registrations are strong, so please continue to register online. As a personal favor, I'm asking you not to wait to do so on-site. Preparation for Hook is immensely detailed, and registering when you get there poses problems in adjusting catering requirements. Life members, be sure to take advantage of the 50 percent registration discount. Go to our website now (www.tailhook.net) and make your room reservations, register for Hook and help this year's Hook '24 scholarship drive by making a donation. Come to Hook and help set a new attendance record.

Special Life Membership Discount at Hook '24

Life membership provides long-term stability to any organization and Tailhook is no exception as roughly 60 percent of all members are now Life members, an all-time high. For those attending Hook '24 or on

MC2 Matthew Nass, USN

deployment, we are once again offering a \$200 discount for a Life membership at the rate of \$595. Your commitment as a Life member takes the guesswork out of knowing when it's time to renew, and it reduces our administrative costs. It is also the best value for your money, so while you are at Hook, be sure to visit the membership booth and take advantage of the discount price. For those age 60 and over, please consider converting to a Life membership as we have special rates available. For details, give our office a call at 858-689-9223.



CAPT Greg Keithley, USN(Ret)

2024 Board of Directors Election

The 2024 election cycle is underway this summer. We have no open seats to fill, but three of our current board members are eligible for a third and final term. They are CAPT Adan Covarrubius, USN(Ret), CDR Mel Palmer, USN(Ret) and CAPT Walt Slaughter, USN(Ret). Regular members have voting rights, so please participate by visiting our website and voting online. Voting will continue through 31 July with results announced at Hook '24 during our annual membership meeting. Cast your vote at our website www.tailhook.net.

Future Hook Planning — Put These Dates on Your Calendar

For future planning, Hook will be scheduled two weeks before the Labor Day weekend. Please add these dates to your calendar.

Hook '25	21–23 August 2025	Grand Sierra Resort, Reno, NV
Hook '26	27–29 August 2026	Grand Sierra Resort, Reno, NV
Hook '27	26–28 August 2027	Grand Sierra Resort, Reno, NV
Hook '28	24–26 August 2028	Location TBD

See you all in Reno!



A.P. Kelly

CAPT Greg "Chaser" Keithley, USN(Ret)
Executive Director
The Tailhook Association



An E-2C Hawkeye assigned to the VAW-120 Greyhawks climbs skyward over the Atlantic Ocean after launching off USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), 14 Mar '24.



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— C.J. "Heater" Heatley III

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AN AIRPLANE STORY



F-14A Tomcat, BuNo 161297, wearing CAG bird markings as it overflies San Diego's Jack Murphy Stadium with another VF-194 Red Lightnings jet on 5 Feb '88.

It was 1982, a year in which the Department of Defense confirmed that the F-14 *Tomcat* remain the sea service's premier fighter and USS *Nimitz* (CVN 68) returned home from a deployment during which a pair of VF-41 *Black Aces* F-14s splashed two Libyan fighters over the Gulf of Sidra. At Grumman Aerospace Engineering Corporation at Bethpage, Long Island, long the cradle of Navy fighter aircraft, F-14A, BuNo 161297, rolled off the assembly line destined for the VF-2 *Bounty Hunters*, one of the squadrons that a decade earlier became one of the first two *Tomcat* squadrons in the Navy.

It served in the squadron for the next five years, logging cruises on board USS *Ranger* (CV 61) and USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV 63) before transfer to the VF-194 *Red Lightnings* in early 1987. It was a brief tour in a short-lived *Tomcat* squadron that disestablished after only 18 months of service from December 1986 through April 1988. Departing VF-194 in December 1987, BuNo 161297 joined the VF-114 *Aardvarks* and remained with the squadron until mid-1992. During that time, the aircraft was part of a world cruise on board USS *Enterprise* (CVN 65) and participated in the maiden deployment of USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72). With the pending disestablishment of VF-114, the aircraft shifted to the VF-213 *Blacklions* in July 1992. The following year, back aboard *Lincoln*, it logged *Operation Southern Watch* missions over Iraq and combat air patrols over Somalia as part of *Operation Restore Hope*.

Joining the VF-24 *Checkertails* in January 1995 for a short stint, the aircraft then spent most of the period 1996–2001 assigned to COMFITWING interspersed with short periods in the hangars of the

VF-211 *Fighting Checkmates* and VF-41 *Black Aces*. In November 2001 it joined VF-211 for a longer stay, just missing the squadron's deployment on board USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN 75) in support of *Operation Enduring Freedom* in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, it was aboard *Enterprise* with the *Fighting Checkmates* for the squadron's final deployment in F-14s, which included flights in support of *Operation Iraqi Freedom*. The squadron's transition to the F/A-18 *Super Hornet* sent BuNo 161297 to the boneyard and eventually scrapping, the aircraft having left its mark on seven *Tomcat* squadrons during its more than two decades of service.

Douglas E. Slowiak



BuNo 161297 in the boneyard at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., in 2005 wearing the markings from its final cruise with the VF-211 *Fighting Checkmates* on board USS *Enterprise* (CVN 65).

MEMBERSHIP CORNER

Welcome New Tailhook Members and Life Members!

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 CDR Michael E. Pinho, USN(Ret)
 Capt Ronald Burke, USMC Veteran
 LCDR Asa V. Brown Jr., USN Veteran
 CDR John H. Akoury, USNR(Ret)
 CDR Jordan Hans, USNR
 CDR Harry P. Brown, USN(Ret)
 Maj Ronald Rasmussen, ARNG(Ret)
 CAPT Jeffrey Panches, USN(Ret)
 Ms. Stephanie Goetz

March New Members

ENS Angel Ayala, USN
 ENS Elisabeth O'Connell, USN
 ENS Mark Protze, USN
 ENS Hunter Arndt, USN
 ENS Chandler Stockton, USN
 ENS Patrick Gallo, USN

March New Life Members

CDR Richard N. Alheid, USNR(Ret)
 Mr. Albert L. Logan
 CDR Jason Pugh, USN(Ret)
 LCDR Walter C. Murken, USN(Ret)
 Mr. William Chiles
 CAPT Matthew Pringle, USN(Ret)

Lt Col T.J. Flannery, ANG(Ret)
 RDML John E. Dougherty, USN
 LCDR Philip Pirofalo, USN(Ret)
 Mr. Richard O. Sirola
 LT Race E. Betancourt, USN
 CAPT William J. Erickson, USN(Ret)
 LCDR Jake Close, USN
 AE2 Neill F. McCormack, USN Veteran
 LT Floyd M. Joramo, USN Veteran
 LTJG Douglas R. McClure, USN
 CDR Christopher W. Lester, USN(Ret)

April New Members

Mr. Tom Anderson
 Mr. Ben Bramblett
 Mr. Kevin Williams
 Mr. Jay Stratton
 AFCM William Dunigan, USN(Ret)
 LT Joe Catterall, RN
 LT Ryan Mostofi, USN
 LT Daniel Jones, USN
 LT Daniel R. Bohannon, USN
 CDR Richard A. Pozniak, USN
 ENS Kirsten A. Tate, USN
 LT Stryker M. Smith, USN
 LTJG Charlie Markert, USN
 LT David Taylor Jr., USN Veteran
 LTJG Ahad Asim, USN
 LTJG Caleb A. Champion, USN
 LT Thomas Frankenberger, USN
 LT Bridgette A. Hickey, USN
 LT Marvin B. Crisostomo, USN
 Dr. Karen Thomas, USN Veteran
 LT Brady Watson, USN
 ENS Maya R. Weiss, USN
 Mr. Stephen J. Brown, USN Veteran
 LT Jared Hachmeister, USN
 LT Autumn E. Koh, USN
 LTJG Stefan Lindblom, USN
 LTJG Robert Livolsi, USN
 LCDR Christopher Mather, USN Veteran
 LTJG Trevor J. Cheatham, USN
 CDR Bradley D. Storm, USN(Ret)
 LTJG Jake Lindow, USN
 LT Jay Wallen, USN
 CDR Charles Shamonsky, USN
 ENS Stephen Gaudin, USN
 LT Javier Reynoso, USN
 LT Carson Brial, USN

April New Life Members

CAPT Emil G. Gram, USN(Ret)
 CPT Philip C. Ecklund, USA Veteran
 Mr. George D. Lawrence, USMC Veteran
 CAPT Brent Jaquith, USN
 CAPT Christopher E. Sund, USN(Ret)
 CAPT Ralph Suarez, USN(Ret)
 CDR Patrick W. Carroll, USN(Ret)
 Mr. Arne E. Johnson
 CAPT Bruce Pieper, USN(Ret)
 CAPT Michael Van Gheem, USN(Ret)

LT Daniel S. Pruitt, USN
 CAPT Michael Longworth, USN(Ret)
 LT William A. Morgan, USN Veteran
 CDR Paolo J. Singh, USN
 CDR Kurt McClung, USN(Ret)
 Mr. Robert C. Forbes, USMC Veteran
 Mr. Bradley L. Hutter
 CAPT John L. Fitzpatrick, USN(Ret)
 LCDR Steven A. Nieto, USN
 LCDR Ed T. Rieke, USN(Ret)
 LCDR Dean W. Sibley, USN(Ret)
 LCDR Richard C. Parker, USN(Ret)
 Lt Col Michael Sadler, USAF(Ret)
 LtCol Timothy M. Miller, USMC(Ret)
 CDR Rick Uchida, USN(Ret)

May New Members

CDR R. Scott Ruppert, USN(Ret)
 LTJG Brendan F. Hardin, USN
 LTJG Timothy Bradford, USN
 ENS Robert A. Ferrante, USN
 LTJG Brian Archer, USN
 ENS Kyle P. Quinn, USN
 LTJG Toby Foelix, USN
 LT Patrick Urrutia, USN
 LTJG James B. Kimberly, USN
 LTJG Jake Rotzler, USN
 LTJG David Henney, USN
 LTJG Parker S. Campbell, USN
 LTJG Kyle G. Erlich, USN
 LTJG Cooper Bishop, USN
 LTJG Shekor C.N. Tobitt, USN
 1stLt Nick Goebelbecker, USMC
 LCDR Gregory Morris, USN Veteran
 LT John Harnsberger, USN
 LCDR Nicholas Engle, USN
 Mr. Mark Kalenak
 Dr. Szilard Kui
 LT Riley Schliem, USN
 LTJG Carolyn E. Riggs, USN
 Mr. Des Murphy
 LT Kara Klein, USN
 LT Alexander Nykaza, USN
 LT Paul Gillcrist, USN
 ENS Joseph D. Crews, USN
 ENS Samuel J. Ott, USN
 ENS Will Ayscue, USN
 ENS Michael Drake, USN
 ENS Chase A. Flato, USN
 ENS Luke Gregor, USN
 ENS Christopher J. Trotta, USN
 ENS Dillon Bright, USN
 ENS Caroline Steffy, USN
 ENS David D. Liu, USN
 ENS Kevin R. Wall, USN
 ENS Joseph Lilya, USN
 LT Andrew C. Hagerty, USN
 LT Suzanne L. Toms, USN
 LTJG Patrick McKernan, USN
 LTJG Brendan Macklem, USN
 1stLt Paul R. Jervis, USMC

LTJG Livia G. Conlon, USN
 1stLt Eduardo Chavez, USMC
 1stLt Sean E. Moriarty, USMC
 LTJG Charlie Hoffmann, USN
 LTJG Benjamin Ryder, USN
 LTJG William H. Wells, USN
 1stLt Sakorey Srongprapa, USMC
 LTJG Joseph A. McCabe, USN
 LTJG Harry Fulton, USN
 LTJG Jack Snauko, USN
 LTJG Alex Peralta, USN
 1stLt Robert A. Vanacore, USMC
 1stLt Everett S. Golenski, USMC
 LTJG Nathan Hersom, USN
 LTJG Ben Brown, USN
 LTJG Austin C. Dement, USN
 1stLt John Russell, USMC
 1stLt Samuel Neff, USMC
 1stLt Daniel Ferris, USMC
 LT Greg Swift, USN
 LT Alexander W. Miller, USN

LTJG Jonathan Beck, USN
 LTJG William T. Cox, USN
 1stLt Andrew Bartholow, USMC
 1stLt Dillon C. Rodriguez, USMC
 LTJG Tristan E. Daniels, USN
 LTJG Carson R. Hawkins, USN
 LTJG Quinn O'Loane, USN
 ENS Kevin Smith, USN
 LTJG David J. Wallach, USN
 LTJG Howard Francis, USN
 LTJG Piero Gardinali Garcia, USN
 1stLt Natasha K. Skrypek, USMC
 LT Andrew Smith, USN
 LCDR Benjamin L. Scripture, USN
 Mr. Robb Mansfield, USMC(Ret)
 Capt John Turpit, USMC Veteran
 LT John Brocksopp, USN Veteran
 LCDR Jill Bond, USNR(Ret)

May New Life Members

PO2 Stephen M. Roberts, USN Veteran


Mr. Leonard R. Schmidt, USN Veteran
 CAPT Mike Welch, USN(Ret)
 RDML John Saccomando, USN
 CAPT Richard Forman, USN(Ret)
 LT Aidan R. Fouhy, USN
 Mr. Robert G. Silva
 Mr. Peter Wilson
 Mr. Thomas Hobson
 LT Ryan Strehlke, USN
 LCDR Jeff Ware, USN(Ret)
 CAPT Chris Dentzer, USN
 CDR Justin Nixon, USN
 LT Rebecca White, USN
 LCDR Thomas Kenny, USN(Ret)
 Mr. Lee C. Olsen
 LT Orion Flurett, USN

Cutoff date — 24 May 2024. All members after this date will be featured in the next issue.





TAILHOOK EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

 Combined Federal Campaign No. 10251

Aloha, Tailhookers,
We hope you are enjoying a peaceful and rewarding summer, and are preparing for what's sure to be an epic Hook '24 in Reno. As you know, Tailhook changed venues starting this year and will hold the annual symposium at the fantastic Grand Sierra Resort (GSR). We look forward to reconnecting with all of you there.

This set of remarks summarizes our 2024 scholarship selection results. Each year between 15 December and 1 March, your Tailhook Educational Foundation (TEF) receives exceptional scholarship applications from the best and brightest Naval Aviation legacy students. This year, scholarship committee members reviewed and scored nearly 500 applications. From these, 130 students earned TEF grants, half of them graduating high school seniors and half current college students. Six recipients were Gold Star students, and three were enlisted applicants. TEF 2024 scholarship grants again averaged more than \$4,000 per grant with one high school senior and one college student earning our top two \$15,000 grants. This year, 54 of our 130 scholarships earned awards of more than \$3,500. The table below shows TEF's 2024 high-value grants breakdown by number of grants and their associated values:

- 2 x \$15,000
- 6 x \$10,000
- 1 x \$9,500
- 1 x \$9,000
- 1 x \$7,500
- 1 x \$7,000
- 3 x \$6,000
- 27 x \$5,000
- 6 x \$4,000
- 6 x \$3,500

As we recap in our quarterly TEF remarks in *The Hook* magazine, without the steady contributions from our loyal Tailhook Association members, our like-minded organizational wingmen and our industry partners, TEF's scholarship program would not exist. We also recognize our tireless scholarship committee as being a critical part of our program

USN



The Blue Angels conduct their traditional flyover during the U.S. Naval Academy graduation ceremony at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium in Annapolis on 24 May '24.

each year. We ask you to please review the insert on this page for the list of TEF's 12 scholarship committee members, who spent countless days and hours reviewing the 2024 applications. Bravo Zulu and our heartfelt gratitude to them all for their hard work. TEF's scholarship program would not succeed without their incredible efforts every year.

On behalf of our TEF chairman of the board, board of directors and staff, and expressly our Naval Aviation legacy superstars who earn a TEF grant each year, we genuinely thank you for your tenacious support of our foundation.

We look forward to seeing you all at Hook '24. Please stop by and see us at the TEF booth in the GSR convention center. Mahalo Nui Loa (thank you very much) again for your continued Kokua' (generosity) and long-standing support to TEF and the Tailhook Association.



CAPT Rodger Welch, USN(Ret)

CAPT Rodger Welch, USN(Ret)
Executive Director
Tailhook Educational Foundation

Please join us in applauding our 12 scholarship committee members for their considerable time and energy devoted to reviewing this year's fiercely competitive high school and college scholarship applications.

When you see them, please thank them for their hard, yet rewarding work.

2024 TEF Scholarship Application Screeners

- CAPT Tracy Barkhimer, USN(Ret)
- CAPT Beth "Gabby" Creighton, USN(Ret)
- CAPT Jack "Fingers" Ensich, USN(Ret)
- Mrs. Kathy Ensich
- CDR Melanie "Mel" Palmer, USN(Ret)
- CDR Steve Queen, USN(Ret)
- Mrs. Dee Queen
- CAPT Scott "High School" Sanwick, USN(Ret)
- Mrs. Gwen Sanwick
- CAPT Jack "Damien" Schuller, USN(Ret)
- Mrs. Marta Tanaka
- CAPT Rodger Welch, USN(Ret)

Alternate Screeners / Scored Application Tiebreakers

- Mrs. Barbara Driscoll
- CDR Greg "Shifty" Peairs, USN(Ret)
- CAPT Bob "Rooter" Rutherford, USN(Ret)

Ship's



Store



Hook '24 T-shirt



Hook '24 Men's and Women's Polo



Tailhook Founded in 1956 T-shirts are available adult and youth sizes. Front is printed with Tailhook Text & Hook Logo



Men's Hawaiian Shirt
Eggshell Pilot or NFO Wings



Fly Navy Lapel Pin



Men's Hawaiian Shirt
Navy Blue Pilot or NFO Wings



Grande Sand Carved Coffee 15oz Mug with Pilot Wings & Hook Cobalt.
Deep Sand Carved Hook & Ship Logo and NFO wings & Hook Navy Blue



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FROM THE CATWALK

CONDUCTED BY “BOOM” POWELL

PHC(AW) Eric A. Clement, USN



Amid the cramped confines of Flight Deck Control on board USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), personnel spot the deck for Operation Enduring Freedom missions over Afghanistan, 14 Nov '01.

CARRIER DEITIES

Flight Deck Control is a wicked, intense place. As a junior officer, I was always a little nervous waiting in there for my hot switch because the handler was a mythical figure with 900 years of sea duty, born through a catapult trough, breathed jet exhaust and chewed on stripped crossdeck pendants like licorice. If you did anything to mess up his launch and recovery flow, the handler would rip your face off and send you whimpering back to your ready room.

—CAPT J.J. “Yank” Cummings, USN(Ret)

The yellowshirt flight-deck directors stand talking to each other or through their lip mics to the little shack in the island, where their uber-gods dwell, or listening to the air boss, Zeus, over all on that deck, whose iron authority extends out to planes in the landing pattern during recoveries, watching everyone and everything from above in his glasshouse throne room high over the flight deck, ordering, scolding, complaining, warning about something he wants, doesn't like or worries him. An Old Testament god, ruling over layered worlds of lesser gods.

—Dead Men Flying, A Remembrance

CHOO-CHOO TRAIN

In 1958, the VMF(AW)-542 *Tigers* flew Douglas F4D *Skyrays* from MCAS El Toro, Calif. On his first flight in a *Ford*, 1stLt Bruce Dean experienced engine problems and flew a precautionary landing approach. Having previously busted a F9F *Cougar* practicing such an approach, he kept his speed up — too much. The *Skyray* hurtled off the end of the runway and came to rest on railroad tracks in time for a train to smash into it. The impact tore away the cockpit, breaking Dean's collarbone and deploying his parachute. *Life* magazine covered the event on its pages.

When asked if he would fly again, Dean replied, “As long as they build them, I'll fly 'em.” Maintainers painted the silhouette of a train on the side of squadron aircraft.

Later at MCAS Yuma, the squadron accidentally fired a 20 mm cannon into the wall of a hangar. A big red and white bull's-eye was soon painted around the hole with the accompanying words, “Who says 542 can't hit the broad side of a barn?”



National Naval Aviation Museum



A VMF(AW)-542 *Tigers* F4D-1 *Skyray* pictured in flight near MCAS El Toro, Calif., during the 1950s.

TUNNEL CLOSED TO TRAFFIC

In Korea, enemy trains would hole up in tunnels for the day and go to work again at dark. AD *Skyriders* started with 500 pounders and worked their way up to 2,000 pounders in an attempt to get at the trains in their hiding places. Most of the tunnels were less than a mile long and about 10 feet wide. The technique developed was to make a fairly standard carrier approach with wheels up and flaps down — 85 to 90 knots was about right — and the drop was made right at the mouth of the tunnel. “Early on, we dropped some short, and damn near bought the farm,” recalled one aviator. “The bombs would tumble, bounce into the air and explode after the time delay.”

UGLY AIRCRAFT CONTEST CONTINUES

The Convair XFY-1 *Pogo* featured a pilot’s seat mounted on gimbals, allowing for movement from 45 degrees forward for vertical flight to 90 degrees for horizontal flight. The turboelectric, three-bladed contra-rotating propellers were 16 feet in diameter. First “flights” were tethered with the prop spinner removed and a cable attached to a crane holding the *Pogo* like a hooked fish in the event something went wrong. There were 60 hours of test flights inside a blimp hangar, followed by 70 takeoff-landing drills at NAAS Brown Field, Calif. The first conversion to horizontal flight took place on 5 November 1954. With no flaps or speed brakes, the XFY-1 could not slow down and stop efficiently. Landing was a problem, as the pilot had to look back over his shoulder and had no vertical references.

Mark Aldrich collection



Convair test pilot James “Skeets” Coleman received the Harmon Trophy for his vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) flights in the XFY-1, pictured here on a flight out of NAAF Brown Field, Calif., in Aug ’54. However, the revolutionary aircraft never entered production.

USN



LT Robert Pitner shakes hands with LT Henry Champion as LT Dennie Earles, left, and LTJG Carl Hall Jr. look on following VF-791 pilots’ return to USS Boxer (CV 21) from a combat mission over Songjin, North Korea, on 4 Jul ’51. They created their own Independence Day fireworks in their F4U-4 Corsairs by destroying an enemy supply train in a tunnel.

Tailhook



The XFV-1 pictured on its tail during evaluation of the VTOL aircraft in 1955. The aircraft featured contra-rotating propellers and was designed to take off and land vertically.



Mechanics at work on a line of Hawker Sea Hurricanes in the hangar bay on board HMS Argus (I49) during World War II.

The Lockheed XFV-1 *Salmon* (not an official nickname) began flight testing with a temporary, nonretractable undercarriage with long V-legs rigged under the fuselage. Fixed tail wheels were attached to the lower pair of fins for a total of six wheels on the tail. The airplane first flew in December 1953, logging 32 flights before cancellation of the project. None of the XFV-1’s flights were vertical takeoffs or landings, although transitions were made from conventional to vertical flight and back.

A turboprop could never reach the speed of a jet fighter, and the concept of a fighter on every Navy deck was dropped.

DOUBLE GOLDFISH

Pilots who ditched were awarded a small, embroidered patch to wear, unobtrusively, on their uniform.

Flying a *Sea Hurricane*, Fleet Air Arm pilot Chris Cartledge attempted his first-ever deck landing in 1943 on board HMS *Argus* (I49) off Scotland. Going around on his fourth attempt, he veered to starboard off the centerline of the flight deck, and the ship’s radio mast sliced three feet off his starboard wing. His aircraft slid over the side and made a graceful, curved descent into the River Clyde. A destroyer took him aboard, the crew giving him dry clothes and filling him up with gin.

Cartledge later borrowed an unfamiliar Blackburn *Skua* in order to keep a date with a “Wren,” the nickname for a member of the Women’s Royal Navy Service, in Liverpool. Unfortunately, he collided with a *Seafire* while taxiing and was court-martialed. He argued that the *Seafire*’s camouflage was so good that he could not see it against the background of a muddy airfield.

Cartledge then went to NAS Brunswick, Maine, to learn to fly the long-nosed, high-performance Vought *Corsair*. Eventually assigned to HMS *Formidable* (67), he flew in a strike against the German battleship *Tirpitz*, during which his wingman was shot down by heavy flak.

Formidable transferred to the British Pacific Fleet in 1945.

On 17 July, anti-aircraft fire struck Cartledge’s airplane as he strafed Matsushima Airfield on the mainland of Japan.



Mark Aldrich collection



Fleet Air Arm Corsairs positioned at the head of a pack of aircraft that include Fairey Barracuda torpedo bombers on the flight deck of HMS Formidable (67) during operations off Norway, Jul '44. The Royal Navy preceded the U.S. Navy in operating the Corsair in the carrier environment.

He struggled back to *Formidable* and thinking his hydraulics had been damaged, he opted to bail out close aboard. Finding that he was unable to release the cockpit hood, he circled the ship waiting for her to complete emergency landing preparations, all the while continuing to try to jettison the hood. When he let go of the control column so that he could twist round and get both hands on the canopy, the *Corsair* cartwheeled and crashed into the sea. Luckily, the impact snapped Cartledge's parachute and seat straps, knocked off the canopy and threw him clear. He was picked up by an accompanying destroyer having suffered no more than a few cuts and bruises. All he remembered was coming to, floating on the water in his Mae West life jacket, and watching the last of his plane sinking under the water.

Chris Cartledge recently "went west" at the age of 100, and the above was adapted from his obituary.

WANNA RACE?

Among operational birds (not test aircraft), the Douglas A3D/A-3 *Skywarrior* may be among the fastest aircraft not equipped with an afterburner. And was there a better cross-country machine? We used to take the TA-3B from NAS Key West with eight guys and all the baggage they could carry and go to California nonstop at Mach .88. Staff officers for the Chief of Naval Operations used to tell us that Secretary of Defense Harold Brown hated their VA-3B because he would leave Andrews AFB in his C-140 *JetStar* (Mach .76 cruise) and CNO would still beat him to distant ceremonies in his special *Whale* despite leaving later in the day.

AND ANOTHER THING...

After a night launch from USS *Independence* (CVA 62) in July 1971, a RA-5C *Vigilante* had an intake ramp failure and diverted to MCAS Beaufort, S.C. The reconnaissance attack navigator recalled, "Fearing a dreaded hydraulic failure, we sped west as fast as we dared, and I started calling their tower, but didn't make contact until we were practically on a straight-in final approach. They didn't seem very welcoming to a ...

Navy jet with an emergency. In all the excitement, the pilot carried a little extra speed on approach, and we took the field arresting gear, not knowing whether our brakes and steering could be trusted. Once stopped, we shut down and carefully climbed down the back of the plane. The first thing we saw was a large puddle of red hydraulic fluid forming under the port wing. The second was the narrow angle of the arresting wire, indicating a failure of the arresting gear to survive our fast engagement. The third thing was the base commander leaping out of a jeep screaming like only a Marine colonel can. It turned out that Beaufort was scheduled for their Operational Readiness Inspection beginning at midnight, ninety minutes away, and we had just shut down — and damaged — the main runway."

Fred Roos



Flying the Chief of Naval Operations flag above the cockpit, a VA-3B Skywarrior sits on the flight line during a visit to St. Louis, Mo., on 23 June '70.



A view of Olongapo, Philippine Islands, taken in 1927. With the establishment of NAS Cubi Point and expansion of NavSta Subic Bay after World War II, Olongapo became a familiar liberty location for generations of Navy personnel.

Courtesy of Ray Powell

BOUNCES

- Here's a backstory for those with time in the Philippines and experiences on the streets of Olongapo. In 1885, the Spanish Navy began construction of the *Arsenal de Olongapo*, dredging both the harbor and its inner basin and constructing a drainage canal. The plan was to make Olongapo and their Navy yard an island.
- "Yet the power inherent in his two stars sobered him. He'd known some officers to whom power became an end desirable in itself, as they rose in rank, rather than remaining a useful tool that could work miracles when properly wielded."

—James Bassett, Harm's Way

- In the wardroom, for Midrats, a cheeseburger was a "slider," and a "Barney Clark" was a cheeseburger with a fried egg on top named in honor of the world's first artificial heart recipient.
- "The Blackburn *Firebrand* was built like a battleship but did not fly as well."
- My instructor never relented in his instruction, which had the quality of ceaseless pounding, so that frequently at the end of a flight my brain seemed to hang limp between my ears, twisted and bruised.

FISHEYE

"*Walleye, Gladeye, Sadeye, Fisheye.* The new 'I' series of weapons has been the special concern of the men and officers of NOTS China Lake. So, when CDR Waldo Born was briefed about the new hush-hush *Fisheye* weapon, he took the bait and went through an elaborately planned briefing and preparation for the first flight of the new weapon. Escorted out to a loaded aircraft and duly cautioned about the 'sensitive VT fuse' of the *Fisheye*, CDR Borne met the new weapon for the first time and nearly collapsed with laughter. The *Fisheye* consisted of a bathtub slung under the aircraft's wing, with the tub 'loaded' with six goldfish in water. The 'fuse' consisted of a string that would permit the water and fish to be dropped on target. The joke — witnessed by Born's squadromates — was initiated because he had once ordered his aircraft loaded 'with everything including the kitchen sink.'"



—Naval Aviation News, January 1964

Right: CDR Waldo Born pictured with the bathtub that was the centerpiece of the *Fisheye* weapon jokingly installed on a VX-5 Vampires A-1E Skyraider. Note the handwritten note warning to not release it on the runway.

Below: A Royal Navy Blackburn *Firebrand* pictured in flight carrying a Mk 4 torpedo, circa 1947.



Mark Allen



SWEET MEMORIES

“Lots of changes happened in the 1960s. In mid-1963 the gunnery phase, the last phase in Basic at VT-3 at NAS Whiting, was dropped. No longer would prop students fly in formation while leading a flight to the overwater gunnery area to practice high-side gunnery runs on a towed banner and fire .50-cal. bullets at a fast-moving target. The joy of rolling off the perch, calling in hot, making a diving 90-degree reversal to track the banner and playing the ‘Red Baron’ in prop-driven trainers was gone forever. I got to do this in early 1962, and what a thrill. [I] didn’t hit a thing, but what do you expect from a future S-2 pilot.”

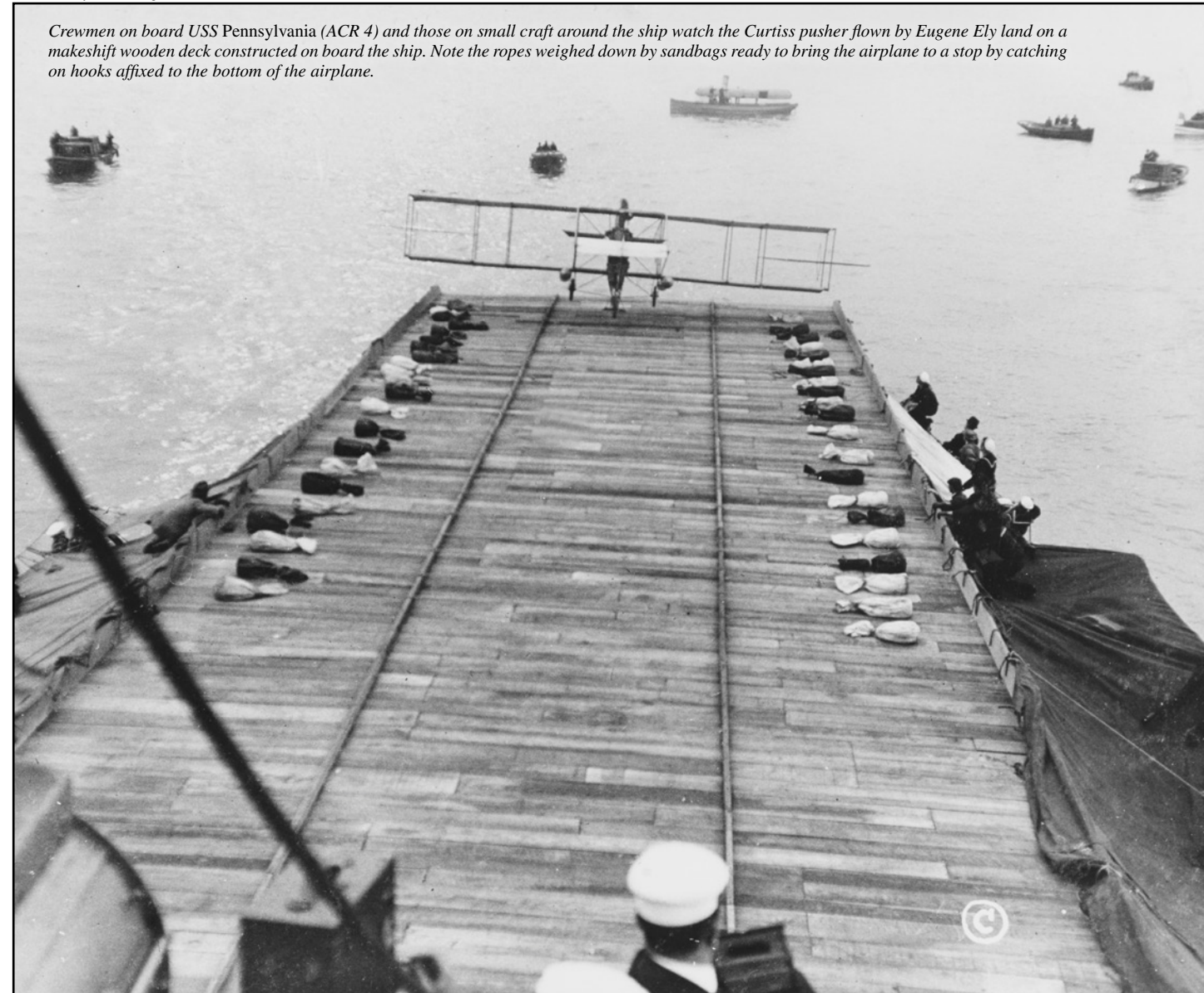
—CDR Doug Siegfried, USN(Ret)

SOME SPLICING REQUIRED

“Much of what we did in weapons development was classified, but here’s an oddball, unclassified example [when] fiber optics were just being developed. A China Lake engineer wanted to determine how much fiber optic cable could be deployed from an aircraft. They developed a converted 300-gallon fuel tank into a fiber optic cable dispenser (the hardest part was figuring out how to wind the cable), then mounted that sucker on an A-7B *Corsair II* with appropriate test wiring and controls [with] one end anchored to the runway. On a pleasant Saturday morning, I manned up and flew the bird in large circles within R-2505 below 200 knots with partial flaps. I dispensed over 66 miles of fiber optic cable before the cable snapped. When I inquired what one does with 66 miles of fiber optic cable littering the complex, I was told not to worry about it!”

—Paul “Booger” Valovich

Naval History and Heritage Command



Crewmen on board USS Pennsylvania (ACR 4) and those on small craft around the ship watch the Curtiss pusher flown by Eugene Ely land on a makeshift wooden deck constructed on board the ship. Note the ropes weighed down by sandbags ready to bring the airplane to a stop by catching on hooks affixed to the bottom of the airplane.

National Naval Aviation Museum



Students flying the T-28B Trojan in VT-3 out of NAS Whiting Field at the time of this photograph in Feb '77 missed the opportunity to make gunnery runs in an aircraft that in performance was akin to a World War II fighter.

TRICK FLYING?

Not everyone was impressed with what Eugene Ely accomplished in performing the first shipboard landing on board USS *Pennsylvania* (ACR 4) on 18 January 1911. *Aero*, a British publication, printed this brief, scathing observation the following week. “This partakes rather too much of the nature of trick flying to be of much practical value. A naval aeroplane would be of more use if it landed on the water and could then be hauled on board. A slight error in steering when trying to alight on deck would wreck the whole machine.”

Chock 'em, chain 'em, and all loose gear into the Catwalk.



LAUNCH

Tailhook

The Canasta Connection

by Doug Bohs



Amidst the heat and humidity of the Tonkin Gulf, ordnancemen load bombs onto VA-25 Fists to the Fleet A-1H Skyraiders on board USS Midway (CVA 41) in preparation for the next launch, Jul '65.

National Museum of the U.S. Air Force

In March 1965, in an effort to prevent North Vietnam from using its entire military power against South Vietnam, President Lyndon Johnson authorized *Operation Rolling Thunder*, a bombing campaign against selected military targets in the North. Certain areas were designated off-limits, including a 10-mile radius around Hanoi, and President Johnson also reserved sole authority over target designations within a 30-mile radius of the North Vietnamese capital.

Beginning in April, U.S. Navy and Air Force pilots (supported by reconnaissance photos) reported the construction of what appeared to be five surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites inside the restricted area. On 24 July, USAF F-4C *Phantom IIs* launched on a mission to strike a munitions factory west of Hanoi. After dropping their ordnance, the F-4s provided air cover for a flight of F-105 *Thunderchiefs*. Heading south after completing his mission, *Thud* pilot Capt Victor Vizcarra heard a call from one of the F-4 pilots saying, “What the hell was that?” This marked the first known SA-2 SAM fired at U.S. aircraft. The exploding 440-lb. warhead had completely destroyed one F-4 and damaged three others.

On Tuesday 27 July 1965, newly promoted Air Force Capt Frank Tullo was flying wing on Maj Bill Hosmer, the leader of a flight of four F-105s out of Korat Royal Thai Air Base. The aircraft were part of *Operation Spring High*, a 48-plane flight of *Thuds* from Korat as well as a base in Takhli, Thailand. Their mission was to destroy two SAM sites near Hanoi thought to have fired on the F-4s.



When examined by photo interpreters, reconnaissance photographs shot over North Vietnam during the early stages of Operation Rolling Thunder revealed the installation of surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft sites.

On his initial run Tullo saw nothing but smoke and flames from ordnance dropped previously, the sky around him full of flak from North Vietnamese anti-aircraft artillery. The flak soon found its mark, with Hosmer telling his wingman over the radio that his F-105 was on fire.

Wanting to put as much distance as possible between himself and the enemy, Tullo flew far to the west of Hanoi before ejecting. While descending he could see the city, which appeared to be between 20 and 25 miles away. After landing on a hillside in an area covered by 10-ft. tall elephant grass, he hid his parachute and organized his survival gear. He then keyed his radio and made contact with a returning flight of *Thuds*. Maj Hosmer responded and assured him they had a fix on his position and were trying to get a helicopter to him. He also told him they had spotted enemy troops to the south of his position.

Soon after hearing this news, Tullo heard a number of shots some distance from him. They stopped, but when they resumed it seemed they were much closer. Suddenly he heard voices coming up the hillside. The Air Force pilot burrowed into the elephant grass and waited. After a short time, he raised his head slightly and observed a man wearing a pointed straw hat about 50 yards away. He concealed himself again, resisting the urge to run. The enemy troops were making a lot of noise but seemed to be moving east and downhill. Waiting until he was confident the area was clear, he moved higher up the slope.

That same morning ENS Holt Livesay of the VA-25 *Fist of the Fleet* (tactical call sign *Canasta*) launched from USS *Midway* (CVA 41) in an A-1H *Skyraider*. With the proper fuel load and suggested settings of both engine and propeller, the *Spad* could stay aloft for an extended period of time, making it ideal for rescue combat air patrol (RESCAP). During these type missions, aircraft typically patrolled areas near where any

Above: The threat posed by Soviet-built surface-to-air missiles like this one exploding near a U.S. Air Force F-105 Thunderchief prompted targeted efforts by U.S. strike aircraft to neutralize them.

Right: Tall elephant grass provided much welcome cover for Capt Frank Tullo and other downed airman seeking to avoid capture and a reservation in the Hanoi Hilton during the Vietnam War.

National Museum of the U.S. Air Force

National Museum of the U.S. Air Force



National Museum of the U.S. Air Force



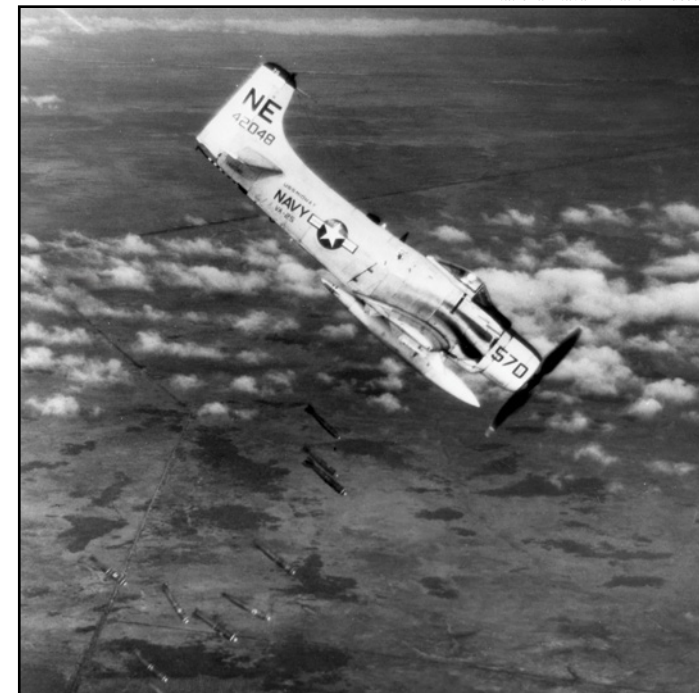
F-105s rain bombs down on targets in North Vietnam during an Operation Rolling Thunder mission. Such was the heavy use of the aircraft during the war that one area of high ground that masked strikes approaching Hanoi received the nickname "Thud Ridge."

National Naval Aviation Museum



VA-25 pilots pictured with one of the squadron's Spads on the flight deck of Midway, 19 May '65.

National Naval Aviation Museum



A *Fist of the Fleet* A-1J Skyraider delivers Mk 81 bombs on a target in South Vietnam, 2 Nov '65. With its long endurance and a payload that exceeded that carried by a World War II B-17 Flying Fortress, the Skyraider proved a highly capable RESCAP platform.

U.S. aircraft would engage in ground attack activity. Upon receiving notification of a downed airman, the mission of RESCAP aircraft was to locate and establish contact. They would then escort the search-and-rescue helicopter to the location of the downed pilot, and more often than not suppress enemy ground fire since the downed pilot and the helicopter were in an extremely vulnerable position during execution of the rescue.

That morning, Livesay was scheduled to fly wing on LCDR Hal Gray, but he developed engine trouble just after launch and returned to *Midway*. Livesay had a full fuel load that prevented him from recovering back aboard the carrier and was directed to circle overhead and wait for the 1230 launch. He would be flying wing on LCDR Ed Greathouse, who after he launched joined up on Livesay, the pair then heading for an area along the coast of North Vietnam. They remained far enough out to sea to avoid any SAMs that may be present and flew a "racetrack pattern." This was normally flown near one of the destroyers in the area, which made them available as quickly as possible for vectoring to downed airmen. The two aviators could hear the radio chatter from the Air Force pilots attacking the SAM sites near Hanoi. The airwaves were quite busy, and it did not seem the attacks were going well.

Midafternoon they received a call to proceed to the position of Capt Frank Tullo. Livesay pinpointed the location on his map and the two aviators rolled wings level, went feet dry and headed straight for his position. The Air Force pilot had been on the ground about an hour when he heard the sound of propeller-driven aircraft. Assuming these were RESCAP aircraft he keyed his radio. "This is *Dogwood Two*, do you read me?" "*Dogwood Two* this is *Canasta* and we read you loud and clear," came the response from one of the VA-25 *Spads*. "Transmit for bearing."

Imagine how difficult it is to spot a man in camouflage flight gear in a jungle hundreds of feet below you while you're flying at speeds between 160 and 170 mph. The terrain



was very hilly. Maj Hosmer, still orbiting above his squadronmate, attempted to direct the VA-25 pilots to his exact location, but they could not see him. During one pass Tullo, using his survival radio, said, "This is *Dogwood Two*. If you look right down your wing, you'll see me. I'm looking right up your wing at you." LCDR Greathouse replied that he had spotted him. Although he actually did not see him, he did not want to worry a fellow airman deep in enemy territory. More importantly he was afraid their continuous circling would draw the enemy to him.

The *Skyraider* pilots informed Tullo they were going to take position some distance away from his location to await the rescue helicopter, but confirmed they would periodically check on him. The pair stayed at treetop level as they headed west to a position 10 to 15 miles farther away from Hanoi. They circled for an hour or two, returning to Tullo's location two or three times to talk to him and let him know they were still there. From their vantage point they could see North Vietnamese MiG fighters taxiing at Phuc Yen Air Base. For some reason the MiGs didn't come up after them, and they were glad they didn't. **Ed. Note:** *The previous month, Greathouse had been one of the pilots on a four-plane flight of VA-25 A-1H Skyraiders attacked by North Vietnamese MiG-17s. Two of his squadronmates shared a kill when they shot down one of the enemy jets.*

Having had to loiter over the ship after launch, Livesay began to worry about running out of fuel. The minimum operational revolutions per minute (RPM) suggested for operating his *Spad's* Pratt & Whitney engine was 1,400. If a pilot flew at 1,400 RPM or "max endurance," he was supposed to go back up to 2,000 RPM every 20 or 30 minutes to keep the engine from fouling. About halfway through this process, Greathouse called to Livesay on the radio. "You might want to pull the prop back to fourteen hundred RPM. [It] looks like this is going to be a long day." He responded that he had been at 1,315 RPM for the last two hours. That was as far back as the propeller control would move.

Later in the afternoon, around 1730, the VA-25 pilots received a radio call from a distant friendly aircraft that was coordinating the rescue effort. The message stated a helicopter was on the way to their position from a landing area on the edge of Laos and instructed them to fly a

Courtesy of Frank Tullo



Capt Tullo, right, shakes hands with Capt George Martin, the pilot of the helicopter that pulled him to safety. It marked the USAF's first Jolly Green Giant rescue of the Vietnam War.

heading of 240 degrees at a specific altitude to intercept it. After several minutes they saw a CH-3C *Sea King* heading toward them. They turned around and flew back toward Tullo's position, this time leading the *Jolly Green Giant*, a nickname adopted from the vegetable company mascot because of the helicopter's size and paint scheme.

When the rescue assets arrived overhead, Tullo was obviously elated to hear and see them. Like the *Skyraider* pilots experienced earlier in the day, the helicopter crew had trouble locating the downed pilot amid tree cover that was 100 feet high and dense. Spotting him after he fired several tracers, they dropped a rescue cable with a horse collar on it. The helicopter had no "personnel" lifters, only cargo handling materials. Tullo put the horse collar over his head and under his arms and gave the signal to pull him up. He didn't realize how traumatic this effort would be once the cargo winch on the helicopter started reeling him in.

After lifting him about 10 feet, the winch jammed. The helicopter crew lowered a rope and instructed Tullo to tie it to the horse collar. He was now hanging by the horse collar dangling far above the ground but still in the treetops. At this point he could see puffs of smoke from what appeared to be small arms fire, but he was not hit.

Realizing the severity of the situation, the pilot of the helicopter, Air Force Capt George Martin, sought to find an open area where he could land and bring the downed pilot aboard. In the process, he dragged Tullo through bushes and tree limbs, nearly killing him, but the *Thud* pilot hung on and finally was lifted clear of the trees. Livesay distinctly remembers thinking, "Boy, he's going to have a hell of a ride back to Thailand on the end of that 200-foot cable."

Unbeknownst to the Naval Aviators, Tullo was enduring a true life or death struggle. Hanging on to the horse collar with his arms, he felt as though they were about to be pulled out of his shoulder sockets. Martin soon found a small field and set the downed pilot on the ground. Tullo freed himself from the horse collar and cable, but unfortunately the field was too small to accommodate the huge helicopter, so Martin had to fly about 50 yards farther to a larger clearing. Tullo came running and dove into the open cargo bay soon after it touched down.

Courtesy of Frank Tullo



The single bandage over his left eye is the only hint of his ordeal as Capt Tullo debriefs his shootdown and rescue.

There had been an added incentive to move quickly. There was a house in the initial clearing and its occupants had shot everything they had at him and the *Jolly Green*. Livesay and Greathouse provided suppressing fire at the house and against several other people who showed up to prevent the rescue. When Tullo dove into the helicopter, Capt Martin and his co-pilot were crouched over the flight controls while bullets whizzed through the chopper. The helo made short work of taking off once the rescued pilot was on board.

Now came the main job of finding the way back to the Air America Lima Site from which the *Jolly Green* had taken off. It was atop a mountain, and the enemy controlled the lower elevations and the land around it. This was Martin's first day up there, having just arrived from South Vietnam. He was so new to the environment that he had not been provided flight maps or charts of the area. When he was sent on this mission, he was told only a direction and altitude to fly and that he would be met by a couple of *Skyraiders*.

The helicopter did not fly as fast as the *Spads*, so it took a while to get back to his Lima Site, and daylight was beginning to diminish by the time they arrived. By this point, Livesay had been in the air over seven hours, which ordinarily wouldn't have been a problem had he not burned extra fuel early in the mission. He had calculated how much fuel he would need to get back feet wet out over the Tonkin Gulf. He thought it would be a bonus to make it back to the ship but was also confident that if he made it out over water and had to ditch, one of *Midway's* embarked helicopters would be able to pick him up. He had not yet reached what was considered a critical fuel state, but it was fast approaching.

With the helicopter successfully returned to Lima Site, Livesay and Greathouse headed back across North Vietnam at night. As they approached the coast, they called *Midway* to announce their position and provide an estimated time of arrival overhead. "Schoolboy [*Midway*] has shut down flight operations for the day," came the reply. "Bingo to Da Nang [South Vietnam]." Livesay suspected that since they had been gone for so long, Air Ops thought they may have been shot down or were otherwise on the ground. There was nothing left for the *Spad* drivers to do but change course and head for Da Nang over 200 miles to the south.

At this point Greathouse passed the lead to Livesay, as it generally takes less fuel to fly lead than to fly on someone else's wing. They flew southward in the pitch dark until within radio range of Da Nang. The normal communication procedure was to request permission to land and identify the "duty" runway. Livesay had been to Da Nang a few times before and knew the main runway was north-south. He called a state of emergency with his low fuel state and indicated that he was making a straight-in approach from the north. There were no questions asked and the two weary aviators landed at 2145, with Livesay having been airborne for 10 hours and 45 minutes. They taxied in, parked their aircraft as directed and shut down the engines. Livesay had an indicated 200 pounds of fuel left, knowing the VA-25 maintenance people had told him the fuel gauges were not accurate within 200 pounds! They asked the tower at Da Nang to call *Midway* and inform the ship they were safely on the ground and would be back tomorrow.

The best part of the long day started when they caught a ride to the Da Nang Officers Open Mess — DOOM Club — where they were able to eat a fine meal and have a few drinks. Livesay had eaten his box lunch while orbiting the ship around noon and had not given much thought to hunger during the action. The DOOM Club was a throwback to the Old West. When pilots entered, they took off their pistols or other firearms and hung them on a peg along a wall on one side of the room. The establishment was a great place for Naval Aviators. Because they operated from aircraft carriers, they were held in high esteem by the Air Force pilots, who wouldn't allow them to pay for a drink. Both VA-25 *Spad* drivers took advantage of the hospitality.

Livesay learned years later that 27 July 1965, was the worst day the Air Force had in Vietnam. Of the 48 aircraft that took off from Royal Thai air bases against the SAM sites around Hanoi, six were shot down. Three pilots were killed, two were captured and Capt Frank Tullo was the only one rescued.

Fast forward to a Friday night in April 1993. Holt Livesay and his wife Judy had returned home from playing bridge with some friends when their daughter asked, "Daddy, where were you July twenty-seventh, nineteen sixty five?" He felt as though he had been struck by lightning. He knew it was not Ed Greathouse asking as he had just seen him at a reunion two weeks earlier. He just knew it had to be Frank Tullo. Who else would be asking after all these years? The caller said he would call again, and he did, leading to a memorable conversation reminiscing about that exciting day.

How was Frank able to locate Holt after all these years? Following his service in the Air Force, Tullo became a chief pilot for Continental Airlines. He was always grateful to the Naval Aviators who pulled him out of the jungle and wondered who they were. All he knew from the radio traffic on the day of his rescue was the callsign of the Navy aircraft — *Canasta*. Whenever Frank met a Navy pilot on board his plane, he asked if they were aware of that callsign.

In the spring of 1993, he finally had an affirmative answer. VA-25 had a squadron reunion the weekend before and either a squadronmate or someone familiar with the *Fist of the Fleet* provided Frank an affirmative answer to his question. He had previously located George Martin, the helicopter pilot, and now he had found Holt Livesay and Ed Greathouse. Frank told Holt he would like to take everyone to dinner on 27 July 1995, the 30th anniversary of his rescue.

Frank made arrangements for Holt and Judy to fly standby from Norfolk to Austin, Texas. Everyone met at Ed's home and Frank made good on his promise. In 2005, they commemorated the 40th anniversary in Dayton, Ohio, with a visit to the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.

The men have had a special relationship over the years, one that can only be truly appreciated by those who have experienced something similar. Livesay summed it up best when he said, "Frank's rescue was to me, the most rewarding thing I did in the Vietnam War."

Ed. Note: *Livesay had a unique relationship with Midway, his father having been a welder who helped build the ship at Newport News Shipbuilding. Frank Tullo's personal account of his rescue, "Tullo and the Giant," appears in the July 1997 issue of the Smithsonian Institution's Air & Space magazine.*

Courtesy of Frank Tullo



The participants in the dramatic events of 27 Jul '65, pictured during one of their reunions, the first of which occurred 30 years to the day after the rescue mission in North Vietnam.

TODAY'S WARFIGHTER WHERE COURAGE MEETS INNOVATION



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An F-35C Lightning aircraft, assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 125, lands on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS George H. W. Bush (CVN 77) during flight operations. GHWB provides the national command authority flexible, tailorable war fighting capability through the carrier strike group that maintains maritime stability and security in order to ensure access, deter aggression and defend U.S., allied and partner interests. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Brandon Roberson)

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“Who’s Sleeping with Bug Roach’s Jacket?” Reflections on Hook ’23

by Bonnie Towne

David Lovett



Examined from any angle, the flight jacket of CDR John “Bug” Roach is a window into his career and unique personality.

“So, who’s sleeping with Bug Roach’s jacket?” I scanned my surroundings for a moment before realizing that the cheerful young lieutenant standing in front of the exhibit booth was referring to me and the battle-hardened flight jacket of legendary Naval Aviator and LSO CDR John “Bug” Roach. I raised my hand slowly.

We briefly discussed my position as the National Naval Aviation Museum’s (NNAM) “keeper of the jacket.” While I traveled to Reno prepared to provide security and reverent care for an irreplaceable artifact, I quickly realized that I had an opportunity for an even greater role, caring for the legacy of the man who once wore it. This endeavor seemed the least I could do while Bug’s flight jacket and I shared quiet happy evenings together in Room 814 at The Nugget.

On the morning of my first day as a volunteer researcher at NNAM, while contemplating the vast archives of Naval Aviation history and culture within its walls, I pulled a random cruise book off the shelf in the library, one that covered the 1969–1970 combat deployment of USS *Ranger* (CVA 61) off Vietnam. I reverently opened the olive drab front cover and at the top was a quote by the writer Ralph Waldo Emerson. The inscription read, “An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man ... Let a man, then, know his worth, and keep things under his feet.” True to my nature, I dutifully wrote down these first words in my small green memo book, certain one day I would have occasion to use them. Five years later, that day had come.

Over time, I would come to understand that the length of the shadow of each person’s influence on Naval Aviation is a function of many factors, including time in service, skill, opportunity, uncanny good luck, brutal bad luck, ambition, intellect, personality, or things I had not considered. As a result, some would cast a long dark late afternoon shadow on Naval Aviation, while others would bear the unspeakable weight of a shadow cast one minute past high noon.

At Hook ’23, I began gathering accounts of Bug’s life and career directly from those who knew him. My goals were to understand why men were quick to laugh upon merely hearing his name, why they spoke with warmth and deep respect in their voice when they recalled their acquaintance, why one man stepped away alone and openly wept after snapping a photo of Bug’s picture, and why multiple others choked back unapologetic emotion as they



Bonnie Towne visits with CAPT Jack “Fingers” Ensch, USN(Ret) during Hook ’23.

Hill Goodspeed

graciously answered my questions. All these things occurred under the silent powerful gaze of the flight jacket at Booth 102.

While talking with Bug's friends, I quickly became uncomfortable focusing solely on questions about him. While I stayed the unsettling course, I was painfully aware that, like Bug, each of the men I questioned had deep rich lives and extraordinary contributions to Naval Aviation. Clearly, the truth of Bug's legacy was more complex than the actions and life of a single man. I knew that an essential element of my inquiry must include reflections on the service of the men I interviewed and what they valued. After all, it is the living who determine who among their ranks are called legends.

Saturday afternoon, after exhausting the supply of Bug's friends inclined to stare at his jacket — as if on cue — I encountered the last of the many smiling lieutenants who visited my booth. I asked if he recognized the name "Bug" Roach. He answered with a laugh. "Yes, of course. I'm an LSO." We briefly chatted about the many references to Bug's exceptional skill at the LSO School at NAS Oceana. As an afterthought, just before the young officer walked away, I asked why he became an LSO. He paused for a moment and as his voice softened, he leaned slightly forward as if to tell me a thing so precious no one else should hear his words. In a calm metered voice, he offered a single sentence. "I became an LSO because they are the keepers of the secrets of carrier aviation." Staying true to my nature, I quickly memorialized his words on a scrap of paper. Soon after, I watched this philosopher incarnation of a young Bug disappear into the exhibit hall crowd.

That night I went back to the room I shared with Bug's jacket to reflect on my many conversations. As I reviewed my scribbled notes, my eyes kept returning to that young lieutenant's words. "HoBo," without any intention, had unequivocally ended my inquiry about the legacy of Bug Roach or any other carrier pilot with a single sentence. I opined I could ask a hundred more friends of Bug about his life, and I would not be one moment closer to a pure understanding of his legacy. I know this with absolute certainty because I too am the keeper of a secret. It is a secret of those with a common purpose, who share the risk of death and the joy of life with equal ease, a hallmark of my fellow Marines, those who greet one another with the phrase "Semper Fidelis."

Clearly the power of an LSO is not that they keep the secrets of carrier aviation, but rather that they whisper them on moonless angry nights and calm sunny days to men and women challenged by circumstance, either of their own making or beyond any measure of their control. So

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LSOs on board USS Hancock (CVA 19) observe a VF-124 Stingaree F7U-3 Cutlass catch a wire during flight operations in 1955-'56.

too is life in the Corps with its unique language only we are privileged to understand. The hard truth is the most eloquent words will not illuminate a single thing of real importance on the subject of our fidelity to one another or what we are able or willing to do to demonstrate the same.

I've come to understand that in Naval Aviation, as in the Marine Corps, there is no distortion of the words conveyed from person to person or from generation to generation. Our unique precious languages retain their crisp concise power whether spoken in 2023, 1923 or 1823. Our respective languages remain a mystery to those on the outside as they are born from the heart of what we collectively value and what we willingly offer in service to those ends. Whether we find ourselves grim faced and clenching on a dark stormy night behind a carrier's wake, hearing the alert of a missile warning over Hanoi or pinned by sniper fire behind a crumbling wall in Fallujah, our respective long shadows whisper their fierce shared secret — "You are not alone." It is the knowledge we are not alone, either physically or in spirit, that allows individuals to cloak themselves in the protective shield of the courage of many. It is the serene weight of this shared courage that allows one to rise to the moment with stalwart grace in the face of sometimes staggering uncertainty, fear or danger whether in combat or training.

Tailhook



The 1,000-trap milestone is cause for celebration on board USS Ranger (CV 61) in 1991. Left to right RDML Ron Zlatoper, LCDR "Tugg" Thomson, CDRs John "Bug" Roach and Denby Starling and CAPT Jay Campbell appropriately holding up rabbit ears.



LSOs at work on the platform on board USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) on a frigid day of flight operations in the Atlantic Ocean, 14 Feb '24.

Tailhook

Bug Roach whispered the secrets known only to carrier aviators an astounding 130,000-plus times to many guided by his steady knowing voice. He was able to balance the high demands of his profession with the joy and exuberance of embracing the moment, regardless of the place or circumstance. He took genuine delight in being in the company of those who shared his joy and whom he was honored to call his friends. His legacy is his exacting, selfless and generous commitment to the professional advancement of those whom he guided from the LSO platform in all weather, day and night.

While this Naval Aviation story is close to an end, it does not end now. When asked how Bug would feel about his flight jacket being on display at Hook or the Friday night mixer bearing his name, everyone reported Bug would be embarrassed, many said deeply. I am not surprised. Certainly, anyone in this small elite community would have a shocking lack of self-awareness if they held themselves above the staggering talent routinely walking the halls at the symposium or on the decks of aircraft carriers around the world.

At the risk of presuming I am in any way qualified to speak for Bug Roach, I believe he would want me to point out one important thing on his behalf; since I am the roommate of his jacket that is. While he may succumb to human nature and be flattered to be called a legend, I believe he would not let a label implying he was unique in his skill stand without strong protest. I want to believe he would be just and point out the countless long shadows of his peers and mentors who whispered the hallowed secrets of carrier aviation to him. He would no doubt speak the names of many of the men I spoke with at Hook or who others spoke about to me.

Such is the enduring nature of Naval Aviation — one person to the next, one generation to the next — with the long shadows of individual men and women, past and present, uniting to form an institution impenetrable. Armed with this knowledge, Bug cast his towering shadow with professional generosity and personal exuberance over all who knew him, while simultaneously reveling and finding shelter in the kindred shadows of others.

There are no do-overs in life, but if there were, I would claim one now. I would imagine the Thursday morning lieutenant approaching Booth 102 again and asking, "So, who's sleeping with Bug Roach's jacket?" This time I would not raise my hand slowly. I would not raise my hand at all. I would answer with unflinching conviction about the continuing legacy he left. "We are all sleeping with Bug Roach's jacket."



CDR John "Bug" Roach wears his signature non-regulation cowboy boots, circa 1989. His legacy lives on each year at Hook with the reading of his prayer and the renowned mixer that bears his name.

Voyage of the Viking

by LCDR Rick Burgess, USN(Ret)



A pair of VS-21 Fighting Red Tails S-3Bs, including the squadron's CAG bird, operate near Okinawa in 2004. Hunting Soviet submarines beneath ocean expanses like that below the aircraft was the initial mission of the Viking.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the delivery of the S-3A Viking to the VS-41 Shamrocks at NAS North Island in February 1974. "We have been trying to do an impossible task with inadequate equipment," said new Commander, Antisubmarine Warfare Wing Pacific RADM James B. Stockdale, who just a year earlier had returned from captivity in North Vietnam. "Now we have a tool to do the job."

The Viking Association will mark this noteworthy occasion with a reunion in San Diego in October 2024. While the aircraft that association members flew and maintained was originally designed to serve as the CVW's dedicated anti-submarine warfare (ASW) platform, during more than 35 years of service, it evolved into one of the most flexible assets on the flight deck. It performed missions in surface and subsurface warfare, armed surface reconnaissance, electronic surveillance, tanking and more. Fleet squadrons operated from NAS North Island, NAS Jacksonville and NAF Atsugi, Japan, before the decision to retire the community as the CVW composition evolved.

Jim Sullivan

On 22 January 2009, the S-3 retired from fleet service with the deactivation (officially 31 March 2009) of the VS-22 Checkmates. Sea Control Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet followed in March 2009. The Viking had completed its last carrier deployment in December 2007, but in late July 2008, four S-3Bs assigned to VS-22 flew to Al Asad Air Base in Iraq. Equipped with Lockheed Martin AAQ-25 Low-Altitude Navigational and Targeting-Infrared for Night-Extended Range (LANTIRN-ER) pods, the Vikings made their last foray to war to conduct nontraditional intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (NTISR) missions for Coalition forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

Hunting insurgents in the desert was a far cry from the original role of the S-3. The Viking proved up to the task, cementing a reputation as a versatile, if not classic, warplane, but its reputation had a rough start. The concept of a modern, jet-powered, computerized aircraft to replace the piston-engine Grumman S-2 Tracker promised to revolutionize carrier-based ASW in the same way that the computerized P-3C version of the

An S-3A assigned to the VS-30 Diamondcutters pictured at NAS Oceana on 25 Sep '76. VS-30 was the first carrier-based squadron to detect a Soviet Papa-class submarine and the first fleet Air-Antisubmarine Squadron to launch a Harpoon missile.



Lockheed Orion advanced the sophistication of land-based maritime patrol and ASW capabilities. But the reality proved disappointing initially, and the Viking was a long time in building a solid reputation.

The Navy initiated a program in 1964 to replace the Tracker, awarding Lockheed the contract to develop a new platform, initially designated VSX, in August 1969. The effort benefited from the digital data-processing system on the P-3C entering service that year. The S-3's mission AYK-14 computer shared many software features of the P-3C and in some ways was more advanced. It featured "waterfall" monochrome digital displays of acoustic sensor information rather than the AQA-7 with its rolling paper gram displays. In fact, the S-3's mission system later was adapted to the CP-140 Aurora, the Canadian version of the P-3C.

The four-man crew of the S-3A included three officers — a pilot, co-pilot, tactical coordinator (TACCO) — and a sensor operator (SENSO), a position normally filled by an enlisted aircrewman. In addition to the OL-82 acoustic system, the crew operated the APS-116 search radar, the ASQ-81 magnetic anomaly detection system, the ALR-47 electronic support measures (ESM) system and the OR-89 infrared sensor turret. The S-3 could launch sonobuoys from 60 externally loaded tubes and carried four Mk 46 torpedoes or a nuclear depth bomb in its bomb bay. Two external wing pylons could accommodate rockets, mines, bombs and fuel tanks.

The first of two YS-3A prototypes made its maiden flight in January 1972. Six preproduction S-3As followed for use in development and trials activity. Following the acceptance of the type by VS-41, the Fleet Replacement Squadron, the VS-21 Redtails were the first fleet squadron to make the transition to the Viking, completing the switch from the S-2 in October 1974. They took the new jet on its first carrier deployment in June 1975 to the Mediterranean on board USS John F. Kennedy (CV 67).

Lockheed completed production of 187 S-3As in August 1978, two years after the S-2G was retired from the fleet. The Viking eventually filled 15 fleet squadrons, which deployed aboard carriers as part of the CV concept. Beginning in 1970, the Navy began shifting ASW squadrons from its old Essex-class carriers dedicated to that mission and combined them with the attack carrier air wing. Not everyone welcomed the CV concept. The ASW aircraft crowded the carrier deck and added

the mission to the ship, which hitherto had been dedicated to strike and air defense. The cool reception was not lost on the S-3 crews.

The fact that the airplane had a co-pilot made it less popular among S-3 pilots, who had to share traps with other, sometimes more senior, co-pilots. An early initiative to resolve this problem was to train TACCOS in piloting to occupy the co-pilot's seat and function as co-pilot/tactical coordinator (COTAC) with enough skill to help with emergencies and routine flying, while also contributing to the tactical ASW mission. Eventually the Viking routinely flew as a single-piloted aircraft, although its dual-pilot capability certainly was an advantage for squadron pilot training flights.

The S-3's sophisticated mission systems experienced growing pains in the carrier environment. Often the mission computer would "dump" during the stress of the catapult shot, forcing the crew to take time to reload the software program. The Navy, in its S-3 procurement program, had insufficiently funded spare parts for the aircraft, and its mission readiness during its initial operations suffered accordingly.

Unlike the P-3, the S-3A, in its early years, rarely encountered Soviet submarines in the normal course of deployments. This contributed to the air wing's poor perception of the Viking's usefulness.

All of these factors did little to enamor CVWs with the new Viking. For example, during the aircraft's Western Pacific deployment in 1979–1980 on board USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63), the VS-21 Redtails operated from NAS Cubi Point, Philippines, for much of the deployment to free up deck space for the rest of the air wing.

On that deployment, however, VS-33 operated the first US-3A carrier onboard delivery (COD) aircraft, a conversion from one of the preproduction S-3As. The US-3A could carry three to six passengers, depending on the version, and haul 5,750 pounds of cargo, 2,000 of it in two pods on wing stations. The US-3A's debut proved fortunate for the Navy when it began routine operations in the Arabian Sea in 1979 during the Iranian hostage crisis. It was the only COD aircraft that could reach the northern areas of that body of water from the air base on the island of Diego Garcia south of India. Eventually, five additional US-3As were modified from S-3As. The US-3A served until retirement in 1994.



PHI L.B. Foster, USN



The Viking proved adaptable to many mission requirements, the US-3A filling the role of carrier onboard delivery platform, its extended range proving vital in the logistical support for forces in the Arabian Sea during the Iranian hostage crisis.

In 1998 the Navy decided to remove the ASW and mining missions from the S-3 community and instead rely on land-based P-3 *Orions* and ship-based SH-60F (and later MH-60R) *Seahawk* helicopters for protection of carrier battle groups. The ASW systems were removed (including 44 of the 60 sonobuoy chutes) and the SENSO crew station eliminated. A crew of three, but often only two, would fly the S-3Bs.

The S-3B also underwent several piecemeal modifications and proof-of-concept demonstrations that affected a limited number of aircraft. Several were modified to fire AGM-65F *Maverick* air-to-surface missiles to counter minor naval threats. These aircraft initially deployed to the Persian Gulf with VS-22 for OSW. Under the *Outlaw Viking* program, the over-the-horizon airborne sensor information system (OASIS) was installed on one S-3B that shuffled between squadrons. OASIS integrated target information into a single picture and transmitted the situation to a battle group commander.

Under the *Gray Wolf* program, one S-3B was equipped with a modified cargo pod that housed a Norden APG-76 synthetic aperture radar (SAR) with a ground moving target indicator and the tactical airborne digital camera system. The radar imagery could be transmitted by datalink to a commander and recorded for post-flight evaluation. The standoff capability offered by this sea-based surveillance targeting attack radar system concept was similar to that used by the Air Force's E-8 Joint strategic attack targeting system. Several squadrons flew the *Gray Wolf* S-3B in exercises.

The S-3B performed its usual refueling and surveillance missions in *Operation Desert Fox* in December 1998, *Operation Allied Force* in early 1999 and continued OSW missions through March 2003. After the terrorist strikes of 9/11, when *Operation Enduring Freedom* began, carrier battle groups launched the longest overland strikes in history beginning in October 2001. The *Viking's* role as a tanker was essential to the success of the aerial campaign by extending the range of F/A-18 *Hornet* (and later *Super Hornet*) and EA-6B *Prowler* sorties over Afghanistan.

PHAN Kristopher Wilson, USN



An S-3B Viking assigned the VS-22 Fighting Checkmates roars off the waist catapult of USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) for an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance mission over Iraq on 16 Jan '05. The final missions of the S-3's career involved detecting improvised explosive devices that threatened Coalition forces.

In 2001 the Navy deployed the Surveillance System Upgrade (SSU) on one S-3B. This added the APS-137B ISAR with SAR ground-mapping imaging and the capability to send detailed imagery aligned with the Global Positioning System (GPS) to a commander or strike aircraft via Link 16 datalink. The aircraft deployed with the VS-35 *Blue Wolves* on board USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72) in 2001 and transferred to VS-24 on board USS *Enterprise* (CVN 65) and the VS-29 *Dragonfires* on board USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN 70). It operated with great success overland in Iraq. In 2003, a Wescam AXS-6 electro-optical turret and a signals intelligence intercept system were installed on another S-3B under the SSU program, which ended in 2004 without further production.

The Navy continued to improve the potency of the *Viking*, adding a land-attack capability in the form of the AGM-84H/K Standoff Land Attack Missile-Expanded Response and increasing the number of *Vikings* capable of launching the *Maverick* missile. These improvements, installed under the *Maverick* plus program, first deployed in 2003. Other improvements included the AYK-23 digital mission computer, GPS and the Carrier Aircraft Inertial Navigation System II.

The S-3B squadrons performed familiar roles in OIF, which began in March 2003. On one occasion in the opening phase of the war, a VS-38 *Red Griffin* S-3B fired a *Maverick* missile in combat for the first time, striking a vessel inland near Basra. During that year, the initial deployments of the F/A-18E/F *Super Hornet*, with a tanking capability that allowed aircraft with buddy stores to accompany a strike formation, marked the beginning of the end for the S-3B force structure. Generally, as a carrier air wing acquired a *Super Hornet* squadron, it gave up its S-3B squadron.

The transition of OIF to a low-intensity conflict brought the threat of improvised explosive devices (IED) to Coalition ground forces in Iraq. Many strike aircraft, with their electro-optical targeting systems, operated in a new role of NTISR to hunt for IEDs and the insurgents planting them. With the retirement of the F-14 *Tomcat*, the Navy had AAQ-14 LANTIRN pods available for further service. The LANTIRN, operated by the VS-32 *Maulers* in 2006 on board *Enterprise*. An extended range version of the LANTIRN was tested on a VS-31 S-3B and deployed with VS-32 in 2007 during the aircraft's last carrier deployment.

Ground commanders in Iraq valued the LANTIRN-equipped S-3Bs for their electro-optical surveillance capabilities, enhanced by the aircraft's high endurance, for road-reconnaissance missions.

As *Viking* carrier deployments wound down, some aircraft went on detachments to the Caribbean to conduct drug-interdiction patrols. They were vital in supplementing P-3 coverage diminished by fatigue-life issues in the *Orion* force.

VS-32 took the *Viking* on its last major carrier deployment, returning home on 15 December 2007, on board *Enterprise*. VS-22 took the S-3B to sea for the last time in April 2008 on board USS *George Washington* (CVN 73) as the carrier transferred from the East Coast to the U.S. Pacific Fleet. The *Viking's* last shipboard venture ended on 29 May 2008. VS-22's LANTIRN-ER detachment to Al Asad, Iraq, returned home on 15 December 2008.

PH3 Joshua Karsten, USN



A view from a VS-30 S-3B Viking down the flight deck of USS John F. Kennedy (CV 67) as the aircraft taxis into launch position for a mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom on 17 Sep '04. This marked the final deployment for the Diamondcutters, which like many S-3 squadrons completed its service with combat cruises during the Global War on Terror.



An S-3B assigned to the VS-21 Fighting Red Tails off Kitty Hawk breaks into a setting sun after completing an aerial refueling mission over the Pacific Ocean.

The *Viking's* naval career ended with plenty of life left in the aircraft, and a respectable surveillance and combat capability. Acquisition of the S-3 force by the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Forest Service and foreign customers such as Chile and Taiwan have been proposed, but no transfers have materialized. One S-3B was transferred to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Glenn Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio, in 2004. It was reconfigured in 2006 for such roles as atmospheric research work, development of reliable radio communications, hyperspectral imaging and environmental research. As the last S-3 in operation, it was retired in 2021 after 16 years of NASA service.

Ed. Note: A similar version of this article by Rick Burgess appeared in the October 2008 issue of *Air International* magazine and the Winter 2008 issue of *The Hook*. Special thanks to CAPTs J.P. Kelly USN(Ret) and Ed Turner USN(Ret), CDR Doug Siegfried, USN(Ret), Jason Tarrant and Nancy Smith Kilkenney, whose writings were helpful in updating the article.

Mark Aldrich



The last flying S-3B, pictured at Gillespie Field on 13 Jul '21, was operated by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

PH3(AW) John Sullivan, USN



Seahawks Soar in Era of AR

by LT Carly S. Courtney, USN

An E-2D Advanced Hawkeye assigned to the VAW-126 Seahawks launches from USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) underway in the Atlantic Ocean on 5 Sep '22. The Seahawks were the first aerial refueling-capable E-2D squadron.

On 14 August 2020, the VAW-126 *Seahawks* made history as the first E-2D *Advanced Hawkeye* squadron to become aerial refueling (AR) capable. In development by Northrop Grumman for years, this capability made the already formidable stationing capabilities of the efficient turboprop-driven *Hawkeye* nearly limitless. VAW-126 qualified its first two pilots on the U.S. Air Force KC-10 *Extender*, but the aircraft are capable of refueling on a variety of platforms, including the KC-130 *Hercules*, Omega 707, F/A-18 *Super Hornet* and the challenging boom-to-drogue adaptor (BDA)-equipped KC-135 *Stratotanker*. This ensures that no matter the time or theater, VAW-126 can keep its crews on station and provide the air wing with the *Hawkeye's* valuable capabilities.

The Squadron

Established on 1 April 1969, VAW-126 celebrated its 55th anniversary just days before personnel embarked USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) for Tailored Ship's Training Availability as part of our Optimized-Fleet Response Plan schedule. The *Advanced Hawkeye* squadron is an integral part

PHAN Christopher P. Stoltz, USN



Established in 1969, VAW-126 has a storied history, including service in Operation Desert Storm and patrols during Operation Southern Watch. In this photograph, LTJG Tara Golden monitors a radar screen during a mission over the Persian Gulf on 25 Apr '01.

of the carrier strike group, participating in a variety of operations such as air intercept control, strike control, surface search and coordination, search-and-rescue coordination and tactical command and control. The *Seahawks* earned the Battle "E" and Safety "S" on their very first deployment in 1970. This legacy has continued to impress a unique measure of professionalism and efficiency upon air wings in which the squadron has served, during which the *Seahawks* have garnered 12 more Battle "E" awards and numerous honors recognizing airborne early warning excellence.

As the first AR-capable *Hawkeye* squadron to deploy, the *Seahawks* completed 526 successful plugs on a variety of platforms while underway in 2022-'23. The vast majority of them were on an F/A-18, with nearly a third completed at night. In celebration of the squadron's 55th anniversary, past and current *Seahawks* shared their experiences with AR. One qualified with only 120 hours in the *Hawkeye*, while another had over 1,000. Together, their varying experiences paint a picture of the enhanced capabilities of the E-2D, how this upgrade has affected the community and its impact in the tactical mission environment.

MC2 Bonnie Lindsay, USN



Deputy Commander U.S. Fleet Forces Command VADM Jim Kilby addresses aircrew in the VAW-126 ready room on board NavSta Norfolk, 18 May '23.

The Pilots

LT Patrick "SoiBoi" Hayes, former *Seahawk* and current instructor in VAW-120, the *Hawkeye* Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS), was the first junior officer to become qualified in every refueling platform during his sea tour with VAW-126, as well as the first 3P in the community to tank. Assigned to the *Seahawks* during 2020-'23, SoiBoi currently has over 1,000 hours in the *Hawkeye* and 295 plugs broken down as follows: 135 from the F/A-18, 106 drogue and 54 KC-135 BDA. He qualified less than 10 days after VAW-126 became AR capable and just one month into his time with the *Seahawks*, with only 120 hours at the time. His first plugs were on the Omega 707, which is still the case for many replacement pilots going through the FRS. Then he went on to the KC-135 and finally the F/A-18. Since the *Hawkeye* was retroactively designed to aerial refuel, it faces some unique challenges, such as a limited tanking envelope and difficult night joins. Aircrew on nearly every platform, including the tankers themselves, use night vision goggles or have head-up displays to aid them when refueling at night, but the E-2D does not. Additionally, SoiBoi says tanking can be made more difficult due to "our limited cockpit visibility."

LCDR Michael "CrEyes" Alexander, maintenance officer of VAW-126, is an experienced AR pilot and instructor with over 2,000 hours. He has been conducting AR since its introduction to the community, estimating over 200 plugs. When CrEyes became AR qualified, he was already an experienced fleet aviator with 1,100 hours in the *Hawkeye*. As was the case for SoiBoi, CrEyes' initial qualification was on the Omega 707, followed by the KC-10, KC-135, F/A-18 and lastly the KC-130. "[KC-]135 is by far the most challenging, and has the smallest margin for error," he says. "Smooth air, a functioning autopilot ... and a good boom operator make all the difference!"



A VAW-126 *Advanced Hawkeye* refuels from a Pennsylvania Air National Guard KC-135 *Stratotanker* on 4 Feb '21. Tanking on this platform is the most challenging for E-2D aircrew.



THE WARRIOR'S BURDEN

by LtCdr "ENGINE EDDIE" Davidson



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Sen Airman Zoe M. Wockenfuss, ANG



A view from the cockpit of an E-2D Advanced Hawkeye of the VX-1 Pioneers during a dusk aerial refueling from an Omega 707 tanker on 1 Aug '19.

The Platforms

SoiBoi agrees with this sentiment regarding the KC-135. "Getting the plug is not the challenge on [the] 135. It's everything after that. The real work on that tanker starts once you are in the basket. The tolerances that you have to maintain the aircraft in to be in a safe refueling zone are extremely tight." He goes on to explain that tanking off the KC-135 has led to four controlled break point activations in the *Hawkeye* community, three of which were during uncontrolled disconnects or "unintentionally or in an uncontrolled manner falling out of the refueling zone." Control is key when refueling off the challenging boom-to-drogue adaptor of the KC-135, due in part to how closely the pilot must maneuver the aircraft and drogue coupling to the rigid boom in order to position the hose in just the right way to allow the flow of fuel.

AOAN Isaac Weatherly, USN

CrEyes recalls the experience tanking on a KC-135 with an inoperable autopilot that led to the fleet-wide decision to prohibit this evolution, illustrating the challenges the platform presents. Attempting to plug on a KC-135 on the *Seahawks'* last deployment, CrEyes explains, "The workload required to get in the basket was so far beyond anything I had seen before, and the only other option was a divert. I was flying in the right seat, with our skipper at the time in the left seat. We made it happen, but it wasn't pretty."

Mission Impacts

All that aside, both CrEyes and SoiBoi believe the benefits outweigh the costs. Previously, SoiBoi explains, the *Hawkeye*, which is an aging airframe, had to wait on station to be relieved until a mechanically sound



A yellowshirt directs a VAW-126 E-2D on the flight deck of Truman underway in the Adriatic Sea on 12 Aug '22, during the *Seahawks'* first deployment with aerial refueling capability.

and capable, or "up" airplane, could get there, or until it ran low on fuel and had to return to the ship. The latter potentially caused a gap in radar coverage. Now, with AR, if there is just one up *Hawkeye* in an air wing, it can stay aloft to provide the strike group with its valuable airborne command and control uninterrupted. CrEyes agrees, saying, "The capability that AR brought the strike group one hundred percent played a role in [our] last deployment." Without aerial refueling and extended time on station, "we would not have been able to provide the support that we provided to EUCOM [U.S. European Command]." As an example, aircrews could fly eight or more hours on station far from the carrier even with no safe or suitable field divers.

"Additionally, modern threats and increased weapon kinematics are making long-range strikes a critical mission set," CrEyes explains. "[Aerial refueling] allows the E-2 the legs and on-station time needed to support that. We were able to prove this concept on the last deployment with a long-range maritime strike [exercise]." AR capability obviously plays a huge role tactically, but it also changes the way *Hawkeye* pilots fly around the ship. "[Refueling] allowed us to routinely show up max trap on the ball after receiving mission give," CrEyes recalls. "I rarely ever approached bingo fuel states on our last deployment, which was a huge contrast to deployments as a [junior officer] where it was relatively routine to show up close to bingo on the ball or see fuel states as low as a two point zero during blue water [operations]."

Looking Ahead

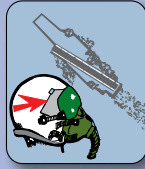
The tactics and carrier environment have changed, but the *Hawkeye* has plenty of room to grow in terms of making the extended station time more comfortable, and ultimately safer for pilots and Naval Flight Officers. "I would love some changes to the aircraft," CrEyes says. "First on my list would be an Improved Landing Mode (ILM). Flying an eight-hour mission and coming back for a night trap in poor weather is not fun." CrEyes also brings up a valid point, which is that "longer flights result in fewer traps, decreasing currency/proficiency around the boat. If we truly want to utilize [AR] to its full capability, we need ILM." Next on his list would be more comfortable seats, a quieter cockpit and a head.

As the *Seahawks* prepare for our upcoming deployment, we drill AR just as hard as field carrier landing practice. Simulators and practice tanking events on KC-135s and F/A-18s occupy as much space on the ops board as bounce periods, illustrating the importance the community places on honing the technique and precision required to operate the E-2D to its fullest extent and perform its crucial role in the strike group. As the battlespace expands, so does the *Hawkeye* community, and VAW-126 has been and will always be at the forefront of these advances. The *Seahawks* celebrate our 55 years with professionalism, proudly serving the U.S. Navy and the nation wherever *Harry S. Truman* takes us.

MC3 Logan Nystrand, USN



The refueling probe on this E-2D of VAW-126 overflying Truman on 13 Apr '24, symbolizes a monumental change for airborne command and control, extending the on-station time for the platform that monitors the skies for the carrier strike group.



IN MARSHAL

Command Changes



TF-70/CSG-5
RDML Greg Newkirk
relieved
RDML Pat Hannifin
12 April 2024
U.S. Fleet Activities
Yokosuka



VAQ-142
CDR Alexander Horn
relieved
CDR Andrew Thom
23 June 2023
USS Gerald R. Ford



VUQ-10
CDR Emily Moore
relieved
CAPT Andrew Gastrell
22 February 2024
NAS Patuxent River



**AIRBORNE COMMAND
& CONTROL AND
LOGISTICS WEAPONS
SCHOOL**
CDR Mark Muncy
relieved
CDR Ryan Mann
21 March 2024
NavSta Norfolk



VAW-117
CDR Paul Reyes
relieved
CDR Dan Berry
8 March 2024
NBVC Point Mugu



**ELECTRONIC ATTACK
WEAPONS SCHOOL**
CDR Christopher Anderson
relieved
CDR Matthew Keefe
14 March 2024
NAS Whidbey Island



VAW-123
CDR Alex Glass
relieved
CDR Melanie Ahle
29 February 2024
USS Dwight D. Eisenhower



HSC-6
CDR Robert Dalton
relieved
CDR Thomas Butts
28 March 2024
NAS North Island



VAW-126
CDR Kallie Rose
relieved
CDR Thomas J. Browning
20 March 2024
NavSta Norfolk



VAQ-131
CDR James Jordan
relieved
CDR Luke Brown
11 April 2024
NAS Whidbey Island



VFA-137
CDR Hall Graham
relieved
CDR Adam Bryan
16 May 2024
NAS Lemoore

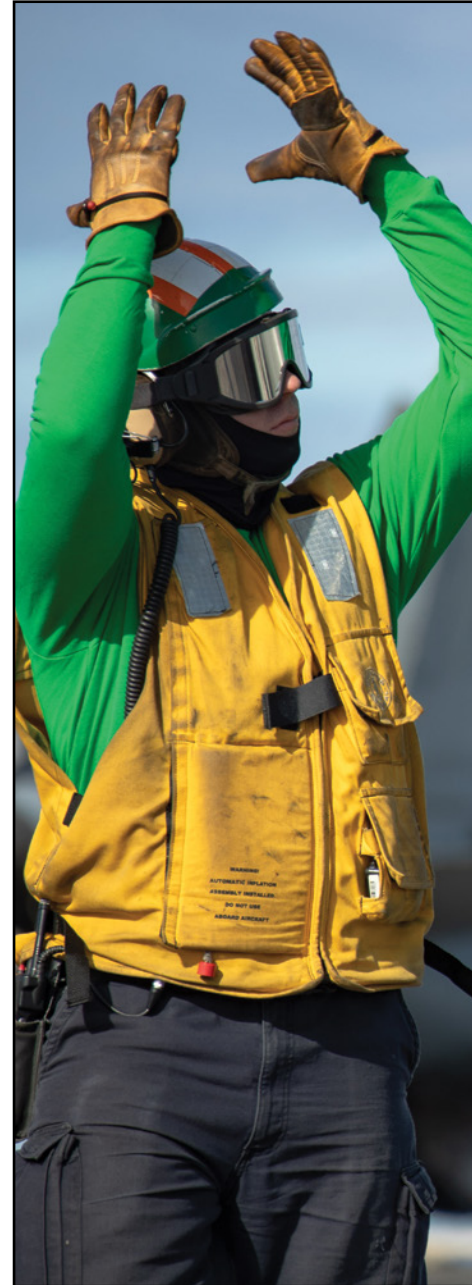


VAQ-139
CDR Antonia Miggins
relieved
CDR Kevin Jones
29 February 2024
NAS Whidbey Island



VFA-211
CDR Sean Stuart
relieved
CDR Marshall Foard
1 March 2024
USS Theodore Roosevelt

MC2 Nolan Pennington, USN



ABE2 Cameron Stroup at work on board USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) on 11 Dec '23.



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With afterburners ablaze, the VFA-143 Pukin' Dogs CAG bird launches from USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) during Flight-Deck Certification, 17 Feb '24.



USS Harry S. Truman
CAPT Dave Snowden



CVW-1
CAPT Bradley Converse

THE DOG DAYS OF WORK UPS

by LT K. Paige "Piglet" Westoby, USN

Since our last update, the *World-Famous Pukin' Dogs* have been in the heat of work ups for our upcoming deployment. To create a cohesive combat team, we have been working closely with other CVW-1 squadrons and USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) to ensure that we are operationally ready to deploy. In the spring we completed the air-to-air Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program (SFARP), which ended the "crawl" portion of work ups. Since entering the "walk" phase, CVW-1 has begun integrating with CVN 75 through Flight-Deck Certification (FDC) and Tailored Ship's Training Availability (TSTA), both of which develop foundational integration between the air wing and ship.

In addition to integrating with our counterparts, the VFA-143 wardroom recently welcomed LT Cassy "Poop" Zachares as our newest pilot and LTJG Brandon Sexton as material control officer. Some of the *Dog* JOPA have completed significant milestones in the strike fighter weapons and tactics (SFWT) syllabus. LT Zach "Checkers" Mullins completed the Level III Combat Section Lead syllabus and rapidly began Level IV events. LCDR Max "One Wire" Maguire, LTs Rich "Sticky" Rader, Paige "Piglet" Westoby and Miranda "Spunkey" Kosmides all completed the Level IV Combat Division Lead syllabus, which made VFA-143 the most tactically proficient squadron in CVW-1 with a total of 12 Combat Division Leads in the ready room. Representing the *Dogs* with thorough professionalism and determination, one of our recently detached JOs, LT Ian "KIMJI" Arbuckle, graduated with TOPGUN Class 02-24 in April with follow-on orders as the VFA-106 *Gladiators* training officer.

In the midst of work ups, the *Pukin' Dogs'* maintenance professionals have set the standard on the NAS Oceana flight line during Conventional Weapons Technical Proficiency Inspections (CWTPI) and Maintenance Program Assist (MPA). VFA-143 earned a 64, which was one of the highest scores on the flight line for the MPA. The *Dogs* still maintain the mindset that there is always room to improve, which is the mentality that has led to VFA-143 receiving the CVW-1 Golden Wrench Award for the first and second quarters.

The *Pukin' Dogs* look forward to applying our talent, obedience and persistence to be precise in all we do. We strive to continue to embody tactical expertise and professionalism, setting the bar in strike fighter aviation excellence both in the air and on the ground.

SUNLINERS SET THE STANDARD

by CWO3 Zoe Squeo, USN

During the second quarter of FY '24, the *Sunliners* have holistically proven our ability to execute in a consistent and repeatable manner by emphasizing safety and operational balance as our core mantra. Through a commitment to excellence and technical ability, the *Liner* maintenance team achieved a 95.2 percent sortie completion rate. This met all CVW-1 and Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic tasking, while maintaining a tactical hard deck, training and developing newly assigned personnel. Exhibiting the *Liner* standard, this team proved without a doubt that we are ready "ANYTIME, ANYPLACE!"

The squadron executed two major predeployment milestones while safely performing 5,286 maintenance actions encompassing 6,749 man-hours. While executing the first ever air-to-air SFARP at NAS

MC2 Matthew Nass, USN



Flight-deck personnel surround a VFA-81 Sunliners F/A-18E on the bow of Truman as the carrier prepares to commence flight operations while underway in the Atlantic Ocean on 15 Apr '24.

Oceana, VFA-81's ability to adapt and tireless efforts resulted in the safe execution of 209.6 flight hours and the expenditure of 1,259.7 pounds of ordnance. Additionally, the squadron successfully conducted all requirements during FDC on board *Truman* with an astonishing 98 percent sortie completion rate. During CWTPI, the *Liners* showed our unmatched ability to check and load aircraft by scoring an impressive 475 out 500 points, receiving a Bravo Zulu from the inspection team.

The *Sunliners* remain adaptable and flexible amid a changing operational environment, with compounding challenges presented by aircraft availability and manning shortages. VFA-81 continues to hone maintenance processes to remain mission-orientated and safety-focused.

Over the course of the last three months, the *Sunliners* bid farewell to LCDRs Brad "Bacon" Tribbley, Mark "Tlev" Dodson and LT Nicole "Dee" Williams.

A number of personnel achieved tactical milestones. The *Sunliners* are excited to congratulate LTs Kevin "CaCA" Byerly on earning SWFT Level III qualification, Gary "Air Dud" Prieto on earning SWFT Level IV and Katie "Pukasso" Arbuckle on earning SWFT Level IV+ qualification. The squadron has been working hard at its continued tactical education, none of which would be possible without the diligent efforts of our maintenance department, whose members work tirelessly to keep jets in the air.

SEAHAWKS SHINE IN ANNIVERSARY YEAR

by LT Carly Courtney, USN

The VAW-126 *Seahawks* continued preparations for our upcoming deployment by successfully completing the *Hawkeye* Advanced Readiness

Program and SFARP last fall. The former took place over multiple months, teaching our aircrew how to operate in a variety of environments across many different scenarios. CVW-1 conducted SFARP locally out of NAS Oceana and NavSta Norfolk, which gave us the opportunity to execute advanced air-to-air tactics with other air wing squadrons. These complex and challenging events allowed our controllers to perfect their skills in the dynamic arena of today's air-to-air fight.

On 20 March, the squadron held a change-of-command ceremony, bidding farewell to CDR Thomas J. Browning and welcoming new Commanding Officer CDR Kallie Rose and new Executive Officer CDR Benjamin Sanders. Shortly thereafter, on 1 April, the *Seahawks* marked our 55th anniversary as a squadron, a day celebrated with a historical remembrance and traditional cake. This anniversary coincided with the chief petty officer birthday, and all attended the joint ceremony held in the hangar.

On 10 April, the squadron embarked *Harry S. Truman* for TSTA, marking the longest underway since the 2022 deployment. This critical phase in the work-up cycle provided the *Seahawks* the opportunity to coordinate with the air wing and *Carrier Strike Group Eight* to execute tactics and train for the upcoming deployment. Soon, VAW-126 will depart for Air Wing Fallon with the rest of CVW-1. This training will allow the *Seahawks* to collaborate with the Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center and participate in large-force exercises and complex battle problems to create tactically proficient aircrews.

We are excited for what the rest of the year will bring as we continue through the Optimized-Fleet Response Program cycle and onto deployment.



MC3 Casey Iwuagwu, USN



An E-2D Advanced Hawkeye assigned to the VAW-126 Seahawks taxis across Truman's flight deck toward the catapult for launch on 22 Apr '24.



CVW-2   CVN 70



USS Carl Vinson
CAPT Matthew Thomas



CVW-2
CAPT Timothy Myers

GOLDEN DRAGONS RETURN FROM WESTPAC

by LT Kurt Wenske, USN

In the second quarter of 2024, the *Golden Dragons* excitedly returned home from a successful Western Pacific (WESTPAC) deployment during which we honorably promoted security cooperation, encouraged peaceful development, responded to contingencies and deterred aggression throughout the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility (AOR). After an outstanding homecoming celebration, squadronmembers quickly dispersed on post overseas movement leave to enjoy well-earned rest and relaxation.

Bearing the flame, the *Dragons* regrouped with gusto and exuberance, diving straight into the tactical execution of unit-level training. During this vital time, candidates completed 87 strike fighter weapons and tactics (SFWT) events. Paramount to this success were two Level III candidates, LTs Kris “TAPLAP” Gundersen and Fraser “Spuddle” Nadin, who completed evaluation check rides to qualify as Combat Section Leads. LT Morgan “DODO” Quinley completed the Level II SFWT syllabus and began the exciting challenge of becoming a Section Lead. Their excellence, hard work and dedication to their craft in earning their new qualifications make them indispensable to the *Dragon* team.

No unit-level training would have been possible without our maintenance team’s dedication to excellence. The squadron conducted 539 sorties encompassing 805.9 flight hours with a phenomenal 95 percent sortie completion rate. *Dragon* maintainers also completed one aircraft acceptance, five pre-carrier inspections and three engine swaps, while sending two aircraft to Planned Maintenance Interval inspections.

Though the downtime never feels quite long enough, the *Golden Dragons* are invigorated and ready as CVW-2 remains the Navy’s on-call air wing. We began with an abbreviated Air Wing Fallon (AWF) and will roll into the biannual Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise, joining *Team Broadsword* in operations alongside 26 allies and partner nations, ensuring cohesion and lethal power projection across the Joint and allied force.

VFA-97 WARHAWKS

by LT Suzelle “Chucky” Thomas, USN

Spring 2024 for the VFA-97 Warhawks included a welcome deployment homecoming and a quick gear-up for continued training. At the end of February, the squadron returned to NAS Lemoore from a cruise on board USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70), during which we toured WESTPAC for nearly five months. VFA-97 successfully deployed with 14 F-35C *Lightning II* aircraft, making it the largest strike fighter squadron to deploy in the Navy’s recent history, and accomplished a 98 percent sortie completion rate over the course of a strenuous cruise.

After returning home the *Warhawks* continued to train even during the post-deployment leave period. VFA-97 qualified its three newest Combat Division Leads, LTs Grant “Hippie” Salk, Brian “Myrtle” Cullinan and Hunter “QuPID” Koltes. Such demanding qualification cycles are a testament to the dedicated *Warhawks* maintenance team, which continues to exceed expectations and demonstrate the highest safety standards, including earning the 2023 CNO Aviation Safety Award for the second year in a row.

MC2 Larissa T. Dougherty, USN



The nose of one VFA-97 Warhawks F-35C Lightning II frames another squadron jet on final approach for recovery on board Vinson during operations in the South China Sea on 22 Jan '24.

Following the leave period, the pilots of VFA-97 traveled to NAS Patuxent River for the annual Joint Simulation Environment (JSE) detachment. At JSE we were able to simulate eight-ship F-35C events to hone the newest tactics against ever-advancing threats. Each pilot executed four to five simulators a day in order to sharpen skills in preparation for our next deployment just a few months away.

In April, the *Warhawks* traveled to NAS Fallon alongside our CVW-2 counterparts to conduct an AWF refresh as a continued part of work ups. In AWF, the combined maintenance and pilot crews came together to facilitate the highest level of training, allowing VFA-97 to continue serving as CVW-2’s premier fifth-generation strike fighter in various large-force exercises. As VFA-97 completes AWF, we gear up for the two-month RIMPAC, the world’s largest international maritime warfare exercise. Together with our nation’s allied partners, the *Warhawks* will complete RIMPAC ready to answer the call to fight and win prompt or sustained combat from the sea.

VAW-113 BLACK EAGLES

by LT Nicholas Workman, USN

In October 2023, *Carrier Strike Group One* (CSG-1) deployed to the U.S. *Seventh Fleet* AOR on board *Carl Vinson*. The VAW-113 *Black Eagles*, along with other CVW-2 squadrons, endeavored to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific through multiple training exercises, port visits and unit-level training missions. Deployment kicked off with Multi-Large Deck Exercise (MLDE), where units from CSG-1 conducted operations with *Carrier Strike Group Five* and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force helicopter destroyer JS *Hyuga* (DDH 181). Following MLDE, CSG-1 shifted focus to Annual Exercise and *Operation Coral Dagger* during the month of November. *Black Eagle* JOs led CVW-2 coordination

efforts with Naval Special Warfare teams for a successful exercise. With two major international exercises under its belt, CSG-1 completed a successful port visit to Busan, South Korea.

After an underway Thanksgiving dinner on board *Vinson*, VAW-113 collaborated with the HSC-4 *Black Knights* as well as Joint and combined partners to coordinate around-the-clock support for search-and-rescue (SAR) efforts in the Philippine Sea. Upon conclusion of the SAR evolutions, CSG-1 conducted various planned tactical events, a port visit to Singapore and an underway Christmas celebration to close out 2023.

To lead off the New Year, CSG-1 enjoyed a final *Seventh Fleet* AOR port visit in Manila, Philippines. Afterward, CSG-1 focused on the final weeks of operations. Notably, VAW-113 officers led three iterations of a Joint exercise, integrating U.S. Air Force assets with the carrier strike group. Following the joint exercise, CSG-1 conducted multiple drills with *Carrier Strike Group Nine*, USS *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71) and JS *Ise* (DDH 182). CSG-1 had then completed all *Seventh Fleet* tasking and began sailing east to return to home port. As a final bookend, CSG-1 sailed to Hawaii for a port visit, welcoming family and friends for the end-of-deployment Tiger Cruise.

Throughout the deployment, VAW-113 played a pivotal role by coordinating and controlling CVW-2 assets, providing a consistent air and surface picture to combined warfare commanders. Additionally, the *Black Eagles* boasted an outstanding 98 percent sortie completion rate, a testament to their teamwork and sustained superior effort in demanding conditions.

We are pleased to congratulate a former JO, LT Charlie “Cabbie” Bill, as the winner of the 2023 Association of Naval Aviation George H.W. Bush Award, recognizing an outstanding first-tour carrier aviator.



MC2 Isaiah B. Goessl, USN



VAW-113 is maintaining deployment readiness through a detachment to NAS Fallon, community engagement participating in Los Angeles Fleet Week and honing our tactical skills as part of RIMPAC. The *Black Eagles* stand ready to dominate the battlespace, answering the call on time and on target!

BLACK KNIGHTS STAY READY

by LCDR Ryan "Rooster" McGuckin, USN

The legendary HSC-4 *Black Knights* returned home from a successful WESTPAC deployment as a part of CVW-2 on board *Carl Vinson* in late February. We have spent the spring at home growing into new hangar spaces at NAS North Island, completing inspections and continuing to advance readiness for another busy year.

The *Black Knights* team prepared for and completed the Helicopter Advanced Readiness Program, Maintenance Program Assessment and Command Assist Visit that occurred nearly simultaneously in mid-April. Despite the high operational tempo, the squadron has maintained and increased proficiency, specifically in SAR jump and hoist training. During the post-deployment period, HSC-4 safely and successfully requalified 17 aircrewmembers for SAR jumps, conducted initial live hoist training for eight aircrewmembers and requalified 19 aircrewmembers in their 180-day live hoist currency. The squadron places great emphasis on live hoist training, ensuring that the team is proficient at various altitudes and conditions so they are best prepared to conduct rescues should the need arise.

In the spirit of innovation, HSC-4 has also been working to develop proficiency with "Knightlink" video relay capability. The *Black Knights* have dedicated time working with technical representatives and maritime and ground-based assets to improve functionality for future use.

HSC-4 earned the 2023 CNO Aviation Safety Award, receiving its third Safety "S" in the last four years. The *Black Knights* team takes great pride in safety and knows it is a culture of excellence and buy-in from every member of the squadron that allows us to win this award year after year. We stand ready to maintain proficiency, readiness and a culture of excellence as we reflect on the last deployment and look ahead to another legendary year.

AWS1 Peter Prosser, USN



For the HSC-4 *Black Knights*, a return from deployment means preparing for the next one, to include search-and-rescue jump and hoist training for rescue swimmers employing the squadron's MH-60S *Seahawks*.

AE3 Lauren Duval, USN



Aircrew and the dedicated Sailors that carry out operations on the flight deck of *USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69)* pictured in front of a VFA-83 *Rampagers F/A-18E* during combat operations in the Red Sea, 12 Mar '24.



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USS Dwight D. Eisenhower
CAPT Chris Hill



CVW-3
CAPT Marvin Scott

UNPRECEDENTED

The 7 October 2023, terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel transformed the deployment of the *USS Dwight D. Eisenhower Strike Group*, leading to the most dynamic combat actions in defense of a carrier strike group since World War II. When *Battle Axe* and *Carrier Strike Group Two (CSG-2)* returned from their Composite Training Unit Exercise last July, the plan for deployment was simple — a port call in Split, Croatia, a brief stint in *Fifth Fleet* and then back to *Sixth Fleet* to continue our European tour. World events demanded a different path as the Secretary of Defense directed CSG-2 to make best speed to the Suez Canal and the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR). We completed carrier qualification and pushed east.

After entering the AOR on 4 November, *Battle Axe* flew *Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR)* missions from the Red Sea (unprecedented!), planned and rehearsed contingency operations in the Gulf of Aden (GOA), and sharpened the knife in the Gulf of Oman and North Arabian Sea. After a quick 36-hour stop for beer-on-the-pier and fried chicken (if you've been there, you know), the *Eisenhower Strike Group* transited the Strait of Hormuz on 26 November, and CVW-3 began supporting OIR from the Persian Gulf. After several Houthi attacks against civilian shipping in and around the Bab-el-Mandeb (BAM) Strait, we canceled Christmas and headed back to the GOA to defend the freedom of navigation the Houthis had begun to hold at risk.

While conducting counterpiracy and presence operations in the GOA, *Battle Axe* began supporting our surface combatants in the Southern Red Sea with defensive counter air (DCA)/Surface Combat Air Patrol missions. On 26 December, the VFA-105 *Gunslingers* drew blood during the Navy's first unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) air-to-air engagement (unprecedented!) while defending civilian merchant shipping and U.S. Navy destroyers. One-way attack (OWA) UAV targeting was no longer an exclusive Standard Missile 2/6 mission, and "Splash One" was called by dozens of *Gypsy*, *Ram*, *Wildcat*, *Gunslinger* and *Zapper* (yes, unprecedented!) pilots over the next four months.

After weeks of defending against OWA UAVs and anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM), the strike group entered the next phase of the conflict in the early morning of 31 December 2023. While *Ambush* (HSM-74 *Swamp Foxes*) and *Dusty* (HSC-7 *Dusty Dogs*) protected *Ike* during her BAM Strait transit, four Houthi small boats attacked the nearby container ship *Maersk Hangzhou*. Responding to the distressed vessel, two MH-60Rs from HSM-74 were deliberately fired upon in a blatant escalation of the conflict by the Houthis. *Battle Axe* doesn't start fights, we finish them; and *Ambush* returned fire in self-defense sinking the boats (unprecedented!).

While Houthi rhetoric escalated following the New Year's Eve self-defense engagement, CSG-2 established a defensive posture in the Red Sea within the Houthi's ASBM, anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM) and OWA UAV weapons engagement zone to protect shipping and deter attack. Despite continued deterrence efforts, on 9 January the Houthis brazenly launched a large multiwave and multidomain attack against the strike group (unprecedented!) in what is now called "The Battle of the BAM."

That night, immediately following scheduled flight operations, the air and missile defense commander called away *Battle Axe* alerts due to indications and warnings of an



a brief stint there, the carrier transited the BAM Strait and proceeded through the GOA to the Gulf of Oman. In late November 2023, CSG-2 was once again redirected, this time through the Strait of Hormuz, to conduct missions from the Persian Gulf. Here, the *Wildcats* flew sorties over Syria and Iraq in support of OIR.

Last December, the strike group received new tasking and transited back toward the GOA to fulfill the oldest mission of our dear Navy — defense of merchant shipping routes and vessels. It would be the Iranian-backed Houthi’s malign behavior that brought *Ike* back to these waters, and subsequently north through the BAM once again to operate out of the Southern Red Sea to degrade the Houthi threat against freedom of navigation.

This is where CSG-2, CVN 69 and CVW-3 made the news daily for our efforts to protect innocent shipping traffic and Coalition vessels from the Houthi’s attempted disruptions to maritime shipping. It was a *Wildcat* pilot, launching as the alert DCA in the pitch black, who started the CVW-3 shooting gallery in the Red Sea. With his VFA-105 wingman behind him, he swooped in and employed his AIM-9X missiles, taking out multiple Houthi attack drones heading toward defenseless merchant vessels. A few days later, *Wildcat* pilots were again called upon by CVW-3 and CSG-2 to participate in self-defense strikes into adversary territory, destroying Houthi missiles and drone sites feet dry over northwest Yemen. Only days later, a VFA-131 section arrived on combat air patrol ready to hunt. Tasking came down to destroy cruise missile launchers positioned to strike innocent shipping traffic. In typical fashion, the *Wildcat* pilots quickly and lethally employed GBU-38 Joint Direct Attack Munitions on the targets, leaving a crater where the launchers once stood. Since then, the squadron has continued to prosecute targets during several preplanned strikes carried out by *Team Battle Axe*, as well as on a myriad of dynamic targeting and DCA flights.

Finally, after nearly three months at sea, the *Mighty Ike* took a knee and allowed the crew to enjoy a beer day. Even on this day of rest and relaxation, there were still *Wildcat* pilots standing the alert, ready to answer any and all aggressions by the Houthis. After a couple of months, two beer days, no ports and a couple of named operations, we have

MC3 Nicholas Rodriguez, USN



Aviation ordnancemen conduct final checks of weapons on the starboard wing of a VFA-105 Gunslingers F/A-18E on the flight deck of *Ike*, 20 Apr '24. Expanded air-to-air missile loadouts have been essential in combating Houthi unmanned aerial vehicles.

continued to perform valiantly in delivering violence of action on time and on target in support of *Operation Yukon Lightning* and OIR, and other CENTCOM tasking.

The *Wildcats* take pride in being the most lethal squadron, in the most lethal air wing, in the most lethal strike group, as part of the most lethal deployment in recent history. It has been the squadron’s relentless pursuit of excellence throughout its history up to the present deployment that has engraved the *Wildcats* name and reputation in the annals of Naval Aviation history. We are, and have always been, AIRLANT’s First and Finest. *Wildcats*, Ready to Hunt!

VFA-105 GUNSLINGERS

by LT Daniel “Panda” Peters, USN

The warm Red Sea winter has faded away and given rise to an even warmer spring. The VFA-105 *Gunslingers* remain on board *Eisenhower* with *Team Battle Axe* as we continue to execute flight operations in support of *Operations Prosperity Guardian* and *Yukon Lightning*. The mission remains the same as it has throughout the U.S. Navy’s history, to ensure the freedom of navigation on the high seas. The past three months have consisted of DT missions and large-force strikes, around-the-clock carrier operations, classic ready room culture and a long-awaited and well-deserved port call.

In order to protect merchant vessels transiting the Gulf of Oman and Red Sea, the *Gunslingers* have executed hundreds of DT missions and employed an unprecedented amount of air-to-air and air-to-surface ordnance to combat Houthi aggression terrorizing the region. We have located, targeted and successfully destroyed threats that presented a clear and imminent danger to the merchant vessels and Coalition warships operating in the region. With a variety of weapons in the Houthi arsenal, we have destroyed a plethora of enemy hardware to include ASBM and ASCM launchers, USVs and OWA UAVs. Commonly, the *Gunslingers* awoke to the sound of the tactical action officer on the ship’s IMC directing the launch of Alert DCA fighters to defend against continued swarm attacks of OWA UAVs airborne in the region.



During a “dirt det” while *Ike* made a port call, the VAQ-130 Wizards continued providing electronic attack support for *Operation Yukon Lightning*, including operations with F-15E Strike Eagles of the U.S. Air Force’s 494th Fighter Squadron.

Preplanned large-force strikes have continued at a steady pace as well. The *Gunslingers* have delivered both the ordnance and fuel required to achieve mission success every time. In the days leading up to each strike, ordnance of all shapes and sizes tightly packed the ship, ready to make the ascent to the flight deck and into the arms of our aviation ordnancemen for loading onto the pylons and missile rails of squadron F/A-18E *Super Hornets*. The tankers and strikers launched in a flurry of other *Battle Axe* jets to execute each mission into Houthi-controlled Yemen. While away, the flight deck resembled a ghost town that brought back memories of the ship just before a fly-on more than six months ago. Every time, the *Gunslingers* executed our mission admirably with metered violence and expert precision.

Back inside the skin of the ship, the *Gunslingers* continued the traditions of a strike fighter squadron underway. The special duty officer’s popcorn has reached a spiciness that makes our maintenance desk wheeze and cough. The wardrooms shudder at the sight of well over a dozen sweaty, salty, meat-eating, French toast-tearing and scrambled-egg-wolfing *Gunslinger* officers arriving all at once for midrats. The whole ready room is now in a competition of small teams to determine the fittest athletes and best ball flyers of the squadron. Recently, we also said a difficult goodbye to two of our own. We bailed LT Evan “Squints” Goss with a sunset cigar social on the navigator’s porch and bid farewell to LCDR Jeff “PWE” Mayer on a cool day with the backdrop of the Suez Canal. Most recently, the squadron welcomed LCDR Julius “Whiskers” Bratton to Ready Room 8.

Finally, in the last days of April, the *Gunslingers*, alongside the crew of *Ike* and CVW-3, finally walked off the brow and onto to the shores of Souda Bay, Greece, for the first port call of deployment. We devoured olives, seafood and cheeses of all varieties. The entire town of Chania is now devoid of bougatsa, wine and tattoo ink. After six and a half months of an arduous deployment, the Souda Bay port call brought a renewed sense of energy and focus to the ready room of VFA-105. When we go home, we do not know, but for the moment, we know exactly where we are going — back to our stomping grounds to defend innocent people from the bad guys of the world and to ensure the freedom of navigation on the high seas! Tonight ... We Ride!

ZAPPERS EXECUTE NUMEROUS FIRSTS!

by LT Martin “Debbie Longhorn” Prikasky, USN

“MAGNUM!” The year 2024 has been a roller coaster for the VAQ-130 *Zappers* with massive amounts of excitement paired equally with challenges. The Hamas attacks against Israel changed everything shortly after we deployed in October. Instead of a short stint in CENTCOM and the bulk of deployment matching previous East Coast carriers’ U.S. European Command cruises, the *Eisenhower Strike Group* rushed into theater and did not have leave nor hit a true port for more than six months. Due to Iranian-backed Houthi attacks on the worldwide economy and the persistent threat to freedom of navigation, CSG-2 maintained a stronghold in the Red Sea, where the *Zappers* played an integral role in defending merchant vessels and the free flow of commerce.

As part of *Yukon Lightning*, the *Zappers* supported multiple strikes and DT sorties deep into the Houthi-controlled territory of Yemen. The strikes, conducted by Coalition forces, continue to deplete the Houthi’s inventory of weapons and munitions used to carry out their attacks. The *Zappers* executed their primary mission of suppression of enemy air defenses with violent precision, creating a sanctuary from which our strike fighter brethren could operate with impunity. VAQ-130 protected Coalition aircraft by providing warning of potential threats, jamming enemy radars with the ALQ-99 tactical jamming pod and employing AARGM, achieving a milestone with the first use of the latter in combat against Houthi SAM and radar sites. The squadron maintained a steady airborne presence for months with no breaks.

The *Zappers* also made history as the first *Growler* squadron to score an air-to-air kill, successfully splashing UAVs operated by the Houthis that threaten merchant shipping and Coalition warships. When asked what it felt like to achieve the VAQ community’s first kill, LT Daniel “Mantrap” Wise replied, “Fan-frickin’-tastic! JOPA 4 Life!!” This is a true testament to *Zapper* aircrews’ abilities to rapidly adapt to a threat, and all of VAQ-130 Sailors’ tireless efforts to keep aircraft, weapons and equipment in a constant state of combat readiness despite multiple extensions and massive amounts of uncertainty with their schedule.

The dynamic environment of the Red Sea requires CSG-2 to maintain an alert posture, ready to respond to any threat.



Despite the many challenges presented, the *Zappers* consistently rise o meet them with an overwhelming desire to DOMINATE THE ELECT- ROMAGNETIC SPECTRUM TO BE DECISIVELY VICTORIOUS IN COMBAT. ANYTIME. ANYWHERE ... even a dirt det in Jordan to allow *Ike* a port call ... Zap Zap Dominate!

VAW-123 SCREWTOPS

by LTJG Avesta Shwany, USN

As the New Year kicked off for the *Screwtops*, CVW-3's mission in the Red Sea took a dramatic tactical shift. On 9 January, the Houthis launched a massive attack on merchant shipping in the Red Sea. CSG-2, CVW-3 and one British destroyer were able to shoot down 18 OWA drones, two ASCMs and one ASBM that were targeting merchant shipping transiting the BAM Strait. During the attack, the *Screwtops* provided critical C2 to the airborne strike fighters, while ensuring the meeting of the warfare commander's intent.

On 11 January, in response to this large-scale attack by the Houthis, CVW-3, *Gravelly* and United Kingdom forces carried out a large-scale, Joint strike to decrease the Houthi's capability to attack vessels in the Red Sea. This was successful in destroying 60 Houthi targets located at 16 sites throughout Yemen, resulting in the destruction of anti-ship missile launch sites, storage facilities and C2 centers. During this large-scale strike, VAW-123 played the crucial role of providing the air picture to the attacking aircraft, C2 for the strike, time-critical authorization and communication relay to the fighters, warfare commanders and Combined Air Operation Center. This was the first time in over two decades that U.S. and U.K. forces have conducted a strike of this scale. Concurrently, the *Screwtops* and CVW-3 have been carrying out precise DT against strategic Houthi targets in the Red Sea.

The changes in the tactical picture have not been the only ones for the squadron during our 2023-'24 deployment. On 28 February, we conducted a change-of-command ceremony as CDR Alex Glass relieved

USN

CDR Melanie Ahle, who had served as the commanding officer of VAW-123 for the preceding 18 months. Her leadership was critical in steering the *Screwtops* to success through work ups and into the first half of deployment. Now, CDR Glass takes the reins and leads the *Screwtops* through the end of deployment and our transition to the E-2D *Advanced Hawkeye* in Fiscal Year 2024. We are also excited to welcome aboard CDR Michael Ptacek as executive officer.

The *Screwtops* remained busy into the months of March and April as we continued to defend freedom of navigation. The squadron's actions have proven to be vital as tensions continue to heighten. As recently as 6 March, Houthi missiles struck the cargo ship *True Confidence*, killing three mariners and injuring many more. These were the first civilian casualties since the Houthis began their attacks on the highly trafficked shipping route. Only a few days later, on 9 March, the Houthi's launched dozens of drones in the Red Sea area overnight, targeting U.S. Navy ships, *True Confidence* as it was under tow to safety and other commercial vessels transiting the region. The *Screwtops*' contributions to CVW-3 directly resulted in the downing of at least 20 UAVs, protecting U.S. and Coalition vessels from damage. To wrap up the month of March, the squadron participated in another large-scale Joint strike.

The *Screwtops* continue to provide airborne C2 for the carrier strike group to defend the free flow of commerce and shipping through the BAM Strait. To date, the squadron has completed over 250 flights for an astonishing 1,500 flight hours in support of multi-axis large-scale strikes and combat operations thanks to all of the hard work of our administrators, logisticians, culinary specialists and intelligence professionals. The *World-Famous Screwtops* are eager and ready to face any challenge that may come our way.

VAW-123 Screwtops aircrew pictured on the flight deck of Eisenhower, part of CVW-3's unprecedented operations in the U.S. Fifth Fleet area of responsibility.



A VFA-27 Royal Maces F/A-18E Super Hornet launches from USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) underway in the Philippine Sea on 27 May '24, during the carrier's final deployment in Forward-Deployed Naval Forces.



USS Ronald Reagan
CAPT Daryle Cardone

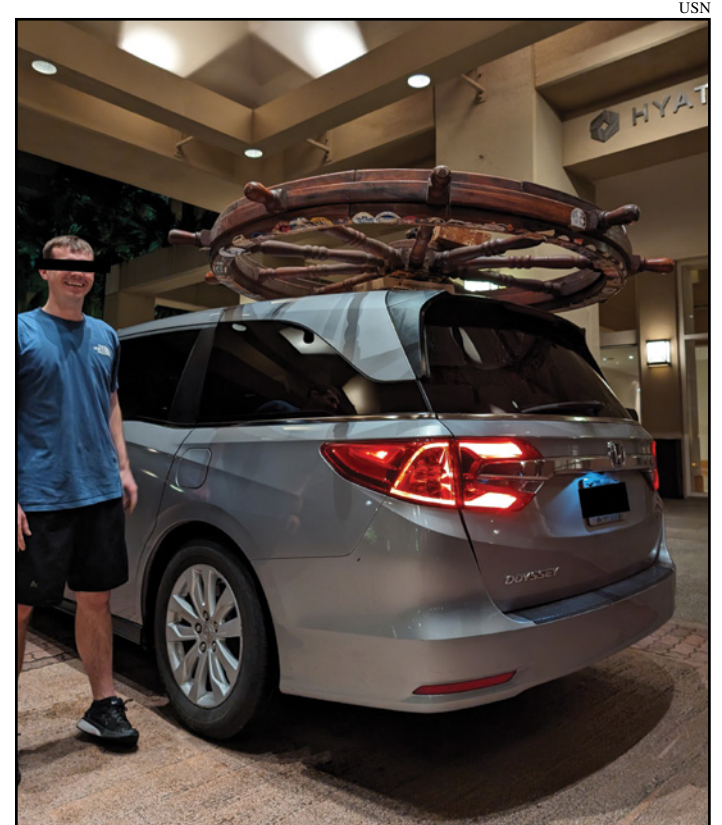


CVW-5
CAPT Patrick S. Corrigan

VFA-27 ROYAL MACES

by LT John "Bath Salt" Brooks, USN

Humbly acknowledging the motivation and pride that accompanied the Commander, Naval Air Force Pacific Battle "E" recognition this year, the *Royal Maces* write to you with heavy hearts as we fell short in our endeavor to secure the most coveted of titles — *Badman* Sports Champions, of course. Despite our hard-charging, killer single-seat physiques dominating through the brackets for basketball, spouses volleyball and softball, it was simply not enough. The *Maces* strolled (perhaps over-) confidently into Club Iwakuni following our 22-3 mercy rule-invoking conquest over the *Shadowhawks* in the softball finals. Then the unthinkable occurred. The endomorphic specimens of VAQ-141, who had prevailed in hobbies such as bowling and the 5K — how is running a sport? — efficiently worked their way through the beer die brackets to the finals, where our hubris-stricken CAG Paddles were outmatched, essentially handing them the trophy ... along with their self-respect (looking at you "BCB"). Though the sting of defeat was still fresh in our hearts (we have clearly let it go after two months), the *Maces* enjoyed good times and fine wine at the *Badman* Ball and were pumped to see our very own skipper, CDR Adam "Jufro" Cohen, take home a Baddie Award with a landslide victory. There was simply no contest for the award for "Best Flow." However, when the winner of "Hingiest Hinge" was announced, we were collectively dumbfounded when we did not hear the name LCDR Ryan "Mayhem" Mahon called.



A Royal Mace in lawful possession of a piece of storied Naval Aviation lore in Tumon Bay, Guam. IYKYK! MiYF!

In March, VFA-27 traveled to sunny Guam to conduct the Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program (SFARP) and from the moment we popped canopies, the sun was out, the sand was white, the water was crystal clear, and the flying was awesome. The *Maces* executed intense air-to-air multiplane events, honed our air-to-surface skills and never passed up an opportunity to re-hack our low-altitude training currency among the Mariana Islands, all of which amounted to some epic training. Although we spent most of the detachment (det) either fumbling with or sharpening our metaphorical spears airborne or in the lovely, seemingly porous, more than slightly black mold-infested training building known as the "Tropicana," VFA-27 did get some downtime. Whether it was karaoke led by LT Sam "Squatch" Schultz with his soulful renditions of "Third Eye Blind" classics, sightseeing at the sophisticated New Hana or looking over our shoulder at any establishment for Strike Fighter Weapons School Pacific guys — most notably Andrew "Move!" Casson or Kyle "Sticky Bill" Wickiser — looking to play a surprise game of "Slap Face," the *Maces* could regularly be found roaming Tumon Bay, only on non-school nights, of course.

Before shifting gears, we would be doing the esteemed perusers of this prestigious periodical a disservice if we failed to chronicle and forever memorialize the true heroes of Guam — the watchstanders. While the Level IV+ strike fighter weapons and tactics candidates were consistently pulling back-to-back 14-hour workdays, their devotion was nothing in comparison to the ground officers who selflessly stood the watch. While the pilots were lounging in a somewhat air-conditioned, partially leak-free building talking about how "valid their employments were," the humble ground officers could be found at their post, no matter the hour. Out in the Guam heat, albeit under shade and with a nice breeze, stripped of their rank in loose, tropical civilian clothes on the sandy beaches of Tumon Bay, they stood the watch. Canvassing the beach, the hotel pools, the beach bar and a mere stone's throw from their hotel rooms, these thankless heroes gave up all semblance of a work-life balance in their dedication to duty. With arguably questionable drinking water, they had no choice but to resort to the abundance of local beverages as their sole source of hydration. They would stand the duty, sometimes with no end in sight, as these grueling watches could last over 24 hours until relief arrived, if ever.

It was their commitment to the General Orders of a Sentry, namely the fifth and eleventh orders, which provided them with the sinew and grit to endure on that stool from before sunrise to long after sunset. In fact, our intelligence officer, Noah "DrainO" Gratiias, went above and beyond the call of duty when he so nobly and selflessly gave up his Navy Air Logistics Office seat for his own Sailor — an act of pure altruism, demonstrating true servant leadership — and stayed behind alone in Guam. For 168 hours, DrainO faithfully fulfilled his duties, not knowing when, or if, his rescue would arrive, and forced to come to grips with a measly \$124 per diem each day. Did he falter given the enormity of his burden? Nay! With nothing but the island's signature refreshments he sat (relatively) upright, continuing to collect MARGINT and, in doing so, demonstrated immense sacrifice that was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

As a result of our super successful trip to Guam, the *Royal Maces* are extremely proud to announce the first JOs in CAG Biz, and quite possibly the entire fleet, to receive Level IV+ qualifications: LTs Jeff "PASTOR" Nadela and Dave "MIJT" Ossing! Clipping at their heels, LT Jake "PESO" Parrott is VFA-27's newest Combat Division Lead! Every other JO is absolutely loving life in Level III now that LCDR(sel) Greg "Sassy" D'Alessandro, leading the charge, finally published the first edition of Sassy's Program on the secret component of the Defense Information Systems Network.

With spring comes new life and given the times, we cannot get a fresh face without first saying goodbye to two or three salty Forward-Deployed Naval Forces (FDFN) veterans. At our Tokyo Dining Out, we bid farewell to LT Shane "Scrat" Kravetz, a cornerstone of the JOPA, and founder and chairman of The Ready 8 Café. He is a great friend and pilot and will be sorely missed. In the throes of the same night, our hearts were heavy and largely confused, as we bore witness to one final debrief from our training officer, LCDR Joshua "HODOR" Gordon. The message was so mesmerizing that one outspoken observer asked repeatedly, "Is this real life ... Is this really happening?" We may never know the answer. Shortly after Guam, LT Gordon "Slowbro" Carroll, the Tanker King himself and a beloved member of the JOPA, departed. But before we even had time to mourn, he had re-entered the stack wearing green patches and uttering cringe-worthy phrases like "Chippy Ho" and

"Say BRC" [basic reconnaissance course] during Case 1 Ops. Goodbyes are never easy, and for some, it may be easier to delay the emotional pain by simply moving down the hall. Just ask former *Mace*, LCDR "Spatch" Aaker, who (allegedly) only accepted a job with the *Dambusters* so he could hang out with us at unofficial functions. You are welcome anytime! Springtime also brought two new additions to the squadron, our new training officer, LCDR Matthew "GASH" Schulteis, as well as another department head, LCDR Bobby "Juice" Ward. Both are quickly acclimating to the squadron and JOPA has entered DEFCON 1.

As we marched nearer to our 2024 cruise, the *Royal Maces* enjoyed reunions with *Mace* superfans at the Atsugi and Iwakuni Friendship Festivals, and embraced the exclusive honor of walking the hallowed, volcanic earth of Iwo Jima as we conducted field carrier landing practice (FCLP) in preparation for deployment.

Until next time and see you all at Hook ... Cheers and MIYF!

DAMBUSTERS PREPARE FOR HISTORIC DEPLOYMENT

by CDR Justin "Corndog" Reddick and LT Chadd Russell, USN

Picking up where we last left off, the VFA-195 *Dambusters* completed a successful deployment in the fall of 2023 after making our historic pilgrimage to the Hwacheon Dam. Upon return to home port, the squadron was rewarded with some much-deserved post overseas movement leave. But no sooner had the calendar turned to 2024 than we found ourselves back at it again in preparation for the next patrol cycle. Early 2024 was busier than most years on record for FDFN in Japan with combined visits from Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet inspectors who conducted a Maintenance Program Assist (MPA) and a Material Condition Inspection (MCI). The squadron and air wing team also received some dedicated corrosion training from the inspectors, which folded their inspections into an MCI reset designed to maximize corrosion prevention and treatment knowledge for all maintainers. In the end, the *Dambusters* racked up air wing leading scores for both the MPA and MCI.

The months of January and February were also particularly busy for the *Dambusters*' social calendar. The ready room said farewell to

LT Kyle "Low-T" Camilli en route to Strike Fighter Weapons School Pacific with the inaugural Buster Olympics. A mere two weeks later, LT Charles "The Lorax" White was bailed with a Buster bonfire on his way to the VX-9 *Vampires*. The final winter farewell was held for LCDR Tom "FISTY" Flynn as he made the move to our nation's capital for his prestigious assignment to the Joint Staff. The ready room also participated in the annual *Badman* sports week. Although our efforts were noble, the squadron reluctantly surrendered the Kin Bukuro trophy to the VAQ-141 *Shadowhawks* at the 2024 *Badman* Ball.

But, as many of you have learned, no good deed (or score) goes unpunished. As soon as the *Badman* Ball wrapped, the *Dambusters* were preparing to take six of our expertly groomed F/A-18Es to Andersen AFB in Guam to support the CVW-5 SFARP det. With an on-time and worry-free arrival by (almost) all CVW-5 fixed-wing squadrons, the *Dambusters* settled into our shore-based home away from home for some invaluable multimission training. At the time of this writing, we can confirm that target island Farallon de Medinilla (FDM) is cold and that the land bridge is still intact.

Following the successful Guam det, where the squadron racked up an impressive 100 percent sortie completion rate, we took some time to keep up foreign relations by conducting our first *Dambuster* Dining Out since before the pandemic. This year's venue was the beautiful Grand Prince Hotel in Hiroshima. Although the staff was apprehensive at first and maybe a little more so when dinner rolls began to fly, it was a huge success! During the event, the opportunity was afforded (directed) to everyone to make their way to the ceremonial Chippy green grog in order to atone for their egregious offenses.

Amid the flying bread rolls, the relaxing of the springs and some lighthearted humor, the squadron said farewell to training officer LCDR Bobby "Juice" Ward and senior LSO LT Chris ">SADCLAM<" Houben as these tactical savages moved to the VFA-27 *Royal Maces* and Strike Fighter Weapons School Atlantic, respectively. The squadron also hailed two new *Dambusters*, LT Braden "SLIP" Miller as Chippy training officer, and LTJG Jake "FNG" Lindow. It may be too soon to tell, but we think we might receive an invitation back to the Grand Prince next year (probably).



USN



The *Dambusters* pictured in front of a squadron jet at MCAS Iwakuni with recently departed department head LCDR Tom "FISTY" Flynn welcoming his newborn child to the squadron.



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With the *Dambuster* Dining Out in the books, the squadron once again shifted its focus to the Iwo Jima FCLP det. Rumors of the newly active volcano just south of invasion beach known as “Nickels Island” rapidly spread throughout the air wing. While no attempts were made to conduct a ceremonial flag raising on Nickels Island, the temptation was almost too much to bear for some *Badman* JOs. This year’s visit to the island was particularly memorable as VFA-195 Command Master Chief Manny “Fresh” Valle, a former Fleet Marine Force corpsman, was able to make his first visit to its hallowed grounds. After summiting Mount Suribachi, he was able to witness the same vantage point that U.S. Marines and U.S. Navy corpsmen viewed for the first time 79 years ago.

Following the invaluable training value and professional development that can come only with a det to Iwo Jima, the *Dambusters* unloaded and set sail on board USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76) for our scheduled patrol within the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) area of responsibility. The first half of the 2024 patrol included the biannual joint exercise with the U.S. Air Force, *Valiant Shield 2024*. This has become a mainstay for CVW-5 and offers incredible integration opportunities for aircrew to plan and work side by side with USAF counterparts. This year’s highlights included a sinking exercise and several other cooperative events in the vicinity of Guam. But as the saying goes, “pics or it didn’t happen.” *Valiant Shield 2024* would not have been complete without the obligatory photo exercise displaying our joint USN and USAF firepower.

Looking ahead as we steam toward San Diego, the squadron is eagerly anticipating the historic fly-in to NAS North Island. When *Reagan* arrives pier-side, the squadron will be making the move back to its former FDNF home on board USS *George Washington* (CVN 73). The entire air wing will also head north to participate in Air Wing Fallon, its first in nine years. Before making our trek north, the *Dambusters* will conduct a Change of Command during which CDR Justin “Corndog” Reddick will relieve CDR Mike “Mitch” Shaughnessy. As far as we know, this is the first time that VFA-195 has conducted a Change of Command in the U.S. since the squadron first forward deployed to Japan in 1986. But not to be outdone by this fact, and almost as if preordained, the 2024 Tailhook symposium will fall exactly during our squadron’s time in Fallon. Current and former *Dambusters*, please be sure to join us at the CVW-5 admin at the GSR where we can raise a Chu-Hi with some Chippy Pride and Chippy Style. For the *Dambusters*, CHIPPY HO!

MC2 Evan Mueller, USN



VAQ-141 SHADOWHAWKS

by LTJG Caroline Buzzard, USN

The VAQ-141 *Shadowhawks*, a forward-deployed electronic attack squadron stationed at MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, is a community of highly motivated individuals dedicated to mission success. We sustained the highest level of performance and maintained unparalleled levels of readiness through our participation in numerous large-force exercises (LFE) both within and outside of CVW-5. Most notably, at the end of March the *Shadowhawks* provided kinetic and non-kinetic support for F-16 squadrons during an LFE at the Japan Air Self-Defense Force’s Misawa AB. The success of this training exercise solidified our ability to successfully integrate with and support Joint platforms when placed in a hostile environment.

Being forward deployed presents us the unique opportunity to interact with the Japanese community and display our professionalism. The *Shadowhawks* participated in two Friendship Festivals, one of which took place at NAF Atsugi, and the other at home field in Iwakuni. VAQ-141 provided two *Growlers*, equipped with ALQ-99 jamming pods, as static displays for the thousands of aviation enthusiasts in attendance.

As deployment approached, the *Shadowhawks* transitioned our training schedule to prioritize safe and expeditious carrier operations. In addition to the Sailors who worked tirelessly to successfully prepare the aircraft for numerous mission sets, aircrew re-hacked their carrier landing skills during FCLP on the historic island of Iwo Jima. The *Shadowhawks* deeply appreciated the incredible and humbling opportunity to once again train on such sacred grounds for both American and Japanese military forces. The completion of this training proved VAQ-141’s combat readiness as we soon set sail on board *Ronald Reagan*.

While many new faces joined the VAQ-141 family, the *Shadowhawks* recently bid farewell to five valued members of the team. CDR Joshua “lil’ b” Menks left VAQ-141 with follow on orders to USINDOPACOM in Hawaii. LCDR Bryant “Tiny Dancer” Smith moved to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, LCDR Nicholas “Spaniel” Lindsay reported to VAQ-138. LT Collin “S2MOG” Bolton headed to VAQ-129 while LT Ryan “Rufus” Hanisco received orders to VT-9 at NAS Meridian, Miss.

ABH3 Charles Cuevas directs an EA-18G Growler assigned to the VAQ-141 Shadowhawks on the flight deck of Reagan on 19 Mar '24.



Having completed her refueling and complex overhaul in 2023, USS George Washington (CVN 73) pictured underway on 18 May '24, for Southern Seas 2024, strengthening partnerships with countries throughout the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility.



USS *George Washington*
CAPT Timothy L. Waits



CVW-7
CAPT Alex Hampton

“We look forward to building readiness and advancing training as we engage with our friends and partners in South America,” stated RADM Robert Westendorff, Commander, *Carrier Strike Group Ten*. Not only is CVW-7 ready to support with various subject matter experts, but members of the air wing have been wingmen to the strike group staff in support of engagements with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay. It has been a team effort, and *Team Freedom* is excited to support the mission.

FLYING THE SOUTHERN SEAS

by LT Ray “Sunshine” Sudduth, USN

Squadrons throughout CVW-7 have not throttled back since the 2023 deployment on board USS *George H.W. Bush* (CVN 77). Over the past six months the air wing prepared to embark USS *George Washington* (CVN 73) this summer to support U.S. Southern Command and U.S. Fourth Fleet’s *Southern Seas 2024* deployment. This will ultimately culminate with *GW* relieving USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76) and returning to Yokosuka, Japan in 2024.

It has been an all-hands effort at CVW-7 to support this return to Forward-Deployed Naval Forces. *Freedom Fighters* squadrons executed a successful Tailored Ship’s Training Availability (TSTA) in February during which carrier qualifications (CQ), Mission Commander syllabus events, and unit-level training qualified not only aircrews, but also flight-deck personnel. While it has been a busy quarter, the support of *Southern Seas 2024* has not slowed down the successes of CVW-7.

The VFA-103 *Jolly Rogers* continue to excel as the only F/A-18E/F composite squadron for the U.S. Navy. These pioneers ultimately support commanders with the data needed in shaping the Air Wing of the Future and earned the Retention Excellence Award in the process. As the weight comes on to support *Southern Seas 2024*, the HSC-5 *Nightdippers* continue to crunch their power calculations now to support distinguished visitor movements with partner nations. The *Nightdippers* can’t be weighed down as they earned the Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic Battle Effectiveness Award for Calendar Year 2023, while the Naval Helicopter Association awarded LT Christopher “Boucher” Jacobsen Pilot of the Year for 2023. Additionally, LCDR Kyle “Dobby” Anderson from the VFA-147 *Argonauts* was named Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet (COMNAVAIRPAC) Pilot of the Year while the squadron earned the McClusky Award.

The caliber of excellence demonstrated throughout CVW-7 makes *Team Freedom* the ultimate ambassadors for Naval Aviation throughout the region.

VFA-103 JOLLY ROGERS

by LT Tyson “Wilson” Stickler, USN

edited by ENS Jack “Bones” Ernie, USN

Since the *World-Famous Jolly Rogers* last checked in, the squadron has undergone some fairly incredible changes. Many photos of the “One-Eyed Jacks” have made their way across the internet, and the rumors are true. On 17 October, VFA-103 welcomed the first of three F/A-18E aircraft to the flight line, officially making it the first deploying composite strike fighter squadron in the Navy. The squadron has used these single-seat jets in all aspects of training and operations in order to ensure that our aircrew receive the required qualifications and to provide feedback to the Navy on how the composite squadron model is working.

MC3 August Clawson, USN



An F/A-18F Super Hornet assigned to the VFA-103 Jolly Rogers launches into stormy skies over the Atlantic Ocean during *George Washington*’s Tailored Ships Training Availability and Final Evaluation Problem (TSTA/FEP), 18 Feb '24.



Rhinos from Team Shogun squadrons pictured during night operations on board USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) underway in the Pacific Ocean on 13 May '24.

Having completed her post-deployment activities, the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) is pictured underway on 18 May '24 for Southern Seas 2024. The ship's mission includes providing support throughout the US Southern Command area of responsibility.

CVW-9



CVN 72



USS Abraham Lincoln
CAPT Pete Riebe



CVW-9
CAPT Gerry Tritz

TEAM SHOGUN

by LT Cory "Juicy" Couture, USN

Greetings, fellow Tailhook members! CVW-9 dove into work ups with a group of Naval Aviators and Sailors chomping at the bit for our 2024 deployment. Our team enthusiastically embraces the principles of "Agile, Disciplined, Lethal," carrying on the legacy of our predecessors.

In April, *Team Shogun* successfully wrapped up Air Wing Fallon (AWF) having the privilege of inaugurating a new rigorous syllabus. The Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center (NAWDC) did a fantastic job of instructing, fostering a performance-driven environment and providing a robust Red Air picture. When not preparing or executing the mission, we seized the opportunity to participate in the grand reopening of NAS Fallon's officers club. Alongside the numerous sorties flown, we conducted many sorties at the o'club and beer die tables. Highlighting the synergy of CVW-9, we operated at full capacity both in the air and on the ground. *Team Shogun's* readiness remains unwavering, and with the completion of AWF our Katana stands razor-sharp, at the ready and eagerly awaiting the next challenge.

After weeks at NAS Fallon, we proceeded to our Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX), our final work-up evaluation on board USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). During this monthlong underway, we completed the final stages of advanced tactical training, underwent thorough evaluation and obtained the necessary certifications for *Carrier Strike Group Three* (CSG-3) to proceed with deployment. Achieving the rigorous metrics necessary for final certification will require the diligent efforts of every officer and Sailor within *Team Shogun*, *Abe*, and CSG-3. As our team approaches the culmination of work ups, we're firing on all cylinders and primed for the challenge ahead!

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We would also like to recognize and extend our appreciation to those who have departed the *Shogun* pattern and offered invaluable mentorship before their departure. A heartfelt thank you also goes out to the squadron commanding officers who have had or will have their Changes of Command prior to deployment. This appreciation extends to CDR Dan "Squirrel" Berry from VAW-117, CDR Matthew "Flo" Diederich from VFA-151 and CDR Dave "Duck" Miceli from HSC-14. We salute you, and you stand relieved. We have the watch!

To those deployed, *Team Shogun* eagerly awaits the opportunity to relieve you. Until then, we raise our glass and toast to you. "HERE'S TO THOSE IN MARSHAL!"

VFA-41 BLACK ACES

by LTJG Jack "Smol Town" Freischlag, USN

As the year progresses, the VFA-41 *Black Aces* are keeping up the high ops tempo that started 2024 and remain in the middle of the Optimized-Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) work-up cycle. January and February saw the squadron participate in *Lincoln's* Tailored Ship's Training Availability (TSTA) final evaluation problem along with the other squadrons of CVW-9. It was a successful evolution in which the entire squadron performed at a high level. In April, the *Black Aces* took part in AWF at Fallon.

We have welcomed a few new faces. LCDRs Ethan "Snorcats" Connors and Matt "Chicken" Faulkner joined as new department heads, and the *Aces* are excited to have them as part of the team. We also congratulate many of our recent strike fighter weapons and tactics

MC3 Sheryssa Dodard, USN



A VFA-41 Black Aces F/A-18F Super Hornet pictured on the catapult just before launching from Lincoln during Carrier Strike Group Three's Composite Training Unit Exercise, 14 May '24.



A pair of VFA-14 Tophatters F/A-18Es prepare to conduct a night launch from Lincoln as the carrier and embarked CVW-9 prepare for their upcoming deployment, 15 May '24.

MC2 Michael J. Clinton, USN



An EA-18G Growler assigned to the VAQ-133 Wizards maneuvers along the VR-1350 during a recent low-altitude tactics training flight.

The *Lids* congratulate two of our pilots, LTs Jeremy “Pepe Silva” Ganse and Ronny “Downy” Hafeza, on earning SFWT Level III qualifications and beginning Level IV training. Lastly, we wish a fond farewell to LT Nikhil “Bing” Nair as he returns to Sherman Field at NAS Pensacola to begin his instructor tour with the VT-86 *Sabrehawks*. We know you will carry on our *Tophatters* legacy and professionalism as you head back to the “Cradle of Naval Aviation.” From the Oldest and Boldest squadron on the flight line, we wish you the best!

VAQ-133 WIZARDS

by LT Cody “FNG” Horst, USN

The VAQ-133 *Wizards* have had a productive spring while training for a deployment with CSG-3 during *Abraham Lincoln’s* TSTA, *Bamboo Eagle* and AWF.

These exercises were geared toward the high-end fight, and proved incredibly challenging and productive, forging new leaders among the *Wizard JOPA*. LTs Aaron “Nomega” Sanderson, Scott “Mezpen” Swegle, Jeff “Smooth Brain” Jernigan and Michael “Mikey Meatballs” Kennedy have all earned *Growler* Weapons and Tactics Program (GWTP) Level IV Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses Lead designations. LTs Kevin “Mr. Weeboto” Vicencio, Keith “Yertle the Salty Sea Turtle” Henzer and

LT Daniel “Chin Diesel” Jones, USN

Samir “Stuka” Patel successfully earned GWTP Level III *Growler* Mission Commander qualifications. Finally, LTs Zachery “Mad Libs” Miller and Cody “FNG” Horst have completed GWTP Level II Combat Wingman syllabi.

We are pleased to welcome the following officers to the squadron: LCDR AJ “Frodo” Dobransky as our tactics department head and LTs Tommy Wickum, Jerry Kigerl and Abby Savidge.

WALLBANGERS FIRST TO BRING DSSC-4 AND AR TO THE FIGHT

by LT Daniel “Chin Diesel” Jones, USN

The *World-Famous Wallbangers* of VAW-117 are nearing the end of the OFRP cycle in preparation for our upcoming deployment with CVW-9 on board CVN 72. The squadron will be the first to deploy equipped with Delta System Software Configuration-Four (DSSC-4) and aerial refueling (AR).

VAW-117 completed TSTA in February and AWF in April. DSSC-4 enables the *Wallbangers* to operate more effectively in a wider set of missions while AR from F/A-18 *Super Hornets* and KC-135 *Stratotankers* creates more persistent command and control (C2) coverage. These capabilities enhance CGS-3’s preparation for deployment and will deliver the C2 while underway.



LT Robert “Lazy SOS” Bailey practices in the field carrier landing practice pattern, honing his skills for the boat.

In a ceremony held in the VAW-117 hangar on 8 March 2024, the squadron bid farewell to CDR Dan “Squirrel” Berry and welcomed CDR Paul “Snooki” Reyes as commanding officer and CDR Michael “Hansel” Boyle as executive officer.

HSM-71 RAPTORS

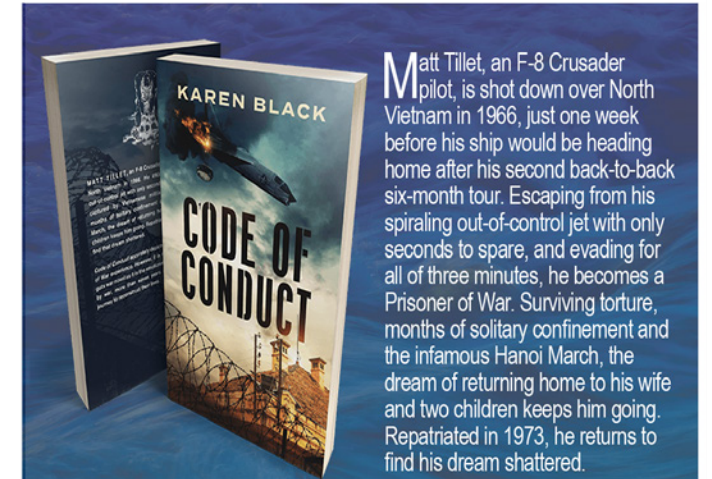
by LT Addison “Dirt Bag” Fine, USN

The HSM-71 *Raptors* rang in the New Year gearing up for our upcoming 2024 deployment with *Team Shogun*. Before departing on TSTA, nine crews completed the Helicopter Advanced Readiness Program, shooting five AGM-114 *Hellfire* missiles and tracking and executing simulated kills on ten Mk 30 Anti-Submarine Warfare Training Targets. In January, the *Raptors* embarked *Lincoln*, USS *Frank E. Petersen Jr.* (DDG 121), USS *Stockdale* (DDG 106) and USS *Spruance* (DDG 111), while HSM-37.4 embarked USS *Michael Murphy* (DDG 112). While the air wing completed TSTA with *Lincoln*, the combat elements and their ships successfully executed Surface Warfare Advanced Tactical Training before CSG-3 became whole and executed group sail.

The *Raptors* then packed our bags and flew four helicopters to NAS Fallon to shoot an additional nine *Hellfire* missiles, employ over 32,000 rounds of 7.62 mm and .50 cal. and conduct landings as high as 8,000 feet in the Pinecone Mountain Range. Returning home to San Diego to continue training over the water, the squadron continued to track and attack Mk 30s off the coast.

This year, the *Raptors* have already qualified three new Helicopter Aircraft Commanders — LTs Chris “Gusher” Marquis, Justin “SKAB” Lambeth and Reagan “Frizzle” Stromback — in addition to four Air Combat Training Continuum (ACTC) Level III pilots and five ACTC Level II sensor operators.

After performing maintenance on nine helicopters to earn a Helicopter Maritime Strike Wing Pacific high score on the 2024 Aviation Maintenance Inspection and successfully completing a Commander, Naval Air Forces unit NATOPS inspection, the *Raptors* are ready to answer the nation’s call. Armed with the experience, knowledge and lethality cultivated in work ups thus far, we have our eyes set on COMPTUEX and beyond. First and Finest!



Matt Tillet, an F-8 Crusader pilot, is shot down over North Vietnam in 1966, just one week before his ship would be heading home after his second back-to-back six-month tour. Escaping from his spiraling out-of-control jet with only seconds to spare, and evading for all of three minutes, he becomes a Prisoner of War. Surviving torture, months of solitary confinement and the infamous Hanoi March, the dream of returning home to his wife and two children keeps him going. Repatriated in 1973, he returns to find his dream shattered.

Code of Conduct takes place in the middle of a war; however, it is not so much a blood and guts war novel as it is the emotional tale of a family torn apart by war, more than seven years of separation, and the long journey to reconstruct their lives.

The goal of Karen Black, the author, is to present the horrendous prisoner-of-war experience and the resulting shattered personal lives in the format of a novel.



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MCSN Nathaly Cruz, USN



Flight-deck personnel check and chain an HSM-71 Raptors MH-60R Seahawk on board Lincoln during operations in the Pacific Ocean on 14 May '24.



Team Barbwire aircraft overfly USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) during a trilateral exercise in the U.S. Seventh Fleet area of responsibility, 11 Apr '24.



USS Theodore Roosevelt
CAPT Brian T. Schrum



CVW-11
CAPT Ross Drenning

TEAM BARBWIRE

by LT Rob "Bummer Bag" Pierce, USN

With the start of the new year, CVW-11 departed for its 2024 Western Pacific (WESTPAC) deployment as an integral part of Carrier Strike Group Nine (CSG-9) on board USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71). Setting sail for WESTPAC is the culmination of a year's effort preparing and training to meet the challenges of deployment.

Traveling from all corners of the country, the squadrons that compose CVW-11 came together aboard CVN 71 off San Diego for carrier qualification (CQ). Instituting an efficient cyclic style CQ plan, Team Barbwire completed all pilot qualifications ahead of schedule before CSG-9 sailed west. Hitting the ground running, the air wing participated in Joint Battle Problem '24, an exercise involving the integration of Navy and Air Force assets in the Hawaii operating area. This robust evolution required Team Barbwire to execute high-level training scenarios utilizing the skills acquired during the work-up cycle.

CSG-9 had the privilege to conduct dual carrier operations with CVW-2 on board USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) as they returned home from deployment. Barbwire personnel spent time on board Vinson discussing lessons learned from CVW-2's deployment to ensure Team Barbwire's



F/A-18F Super Hornets assigned to the VFA-154 Black Knights return to Theodore Roosevelt during operations in the South China Sea on 27 Mar '24.

It begins with a hydroponic system and a predeployment trip to Lowe's. What plant can live with no sunlight or soil? "Nothing," the employee said. So, I went across the street to Home Depot, where they told me I could grow it and they could help. I decided on microgreens, strawberries, jalapenos, and, as a true Hail Mary, sugar baby watermelon.

On the night we set sail, each little seed was soaked in a sponge and baked under a light bright enough to piss off every one of my roommates. I was optimistic for the seedlings, and for the Knights, unaware at the time how symbolic this moment would be.

In two weeks, we had steamed across the entire Pacific Ocean, and not a single seed had sprouted. I honestly believed nothing ever would, but this cruise was not destined for a fruitless endeavor. I noticed a crack in the jalapeno seed, and through it the tiniest hint of green emerged. Matching the initiative, the others soon followed, and the once lifeless steel trap was suddenly a delicate ecosystem.



Flight-deck personnel positioned around the tail of a VFA-211 Fighting Checkmates F/A-18E signal in preparation for launch during flight operations on board TR in the Philippine Sea, 15 Feb '24.

Then devastation struck. Upon returning from a Guam port call, I was forced to bury at sea the remains of both the melon and the microgreens. The melon's demise came from within. He grew a root so strong that he suspended himself in midair above the sponge and was dehydrated to a crisp. But the case of the microgreens, it seemed, was a homicide. The jalapeno root system had invaded its neighboring sponge and subsequently strangled the microgreens to death.

In times of uncertainty, it is easy to lose sight of what is in and out of our control. Will my overnight Alert 30 launch tonight? Is Wi-Fi ever going to return so I can check the incidental charges from the admin? Are the strawberries going to be spicy because I accidentally crossbred them with my jalapenos? Probably, probably not and definitely. But we load that mission card, refresh that page and plant another seed, hoping for the best, because that's all we can do.

It has been 71 days since, and the jalapeno plant stands two feet tall. The very first strawberry is just now beginning to blush a gentle red. The watermelon, against all odds, returned with a healthy vine spiraling up its support rod. Unfortunately, the microgreens never sprouted again.

So, what does the future hold? Maybe the watermelon will wither and die again in unforeseen circumstances. And it's possible TR will get extended. But right now, there are flowers on the vine and the Black Knights are feeling inspired.

We're a strike fighter squadron that's earned the right to look back on the last four months of deployment and take pride in how far we've come. If these plants can survive a room inspection, what can't we accomplish? Through the ups and the downs, from the sow to the harvest, we will endure the journey, and we are ready for any turn that it takes. BKR!

VFA-211 TAKES ON WESTPAC

by LT Cole "Touchdown" Cathey, USN

VFA-211 has been busy the past couple of months settling into life at sea on board Theodore Roosevelt. We said, "fair winds and following seas" to our former skipper, CDR



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AROUND THE FLEET

SEAHUNTER staff assembled next to one of the school's MH-60R Seahawks, a new addition to the Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center flight line at NAS Fallon.

SEAHUNTER UPDATE – MH-60Rs ARRIVE AT NAWDC

The first of four MH-60R *Seahawks* arrived on 26 January 2024, delivered by CDR “Jean Luc” Richard, LT “Tin Man” Canclini and AWRCM Nick Hunter. After a three-year effort involving Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, N98 and the Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center (NAWDC) staff, all of the CVW’s aircraft are represented on the NAWDC flight line. The arrival of the MH-60R within the first year of standing up the MH-60R Weapons School, SEAHUNTER, will go a long way to improving instructor staff tactical proficiency and open opportunities for advanced tactical development and experimentation.

With the SEAHUNTER staff growing from six to 10 lieutenant instructors, the addition of four MH-60Rs at NAWDC doubles down on the HSM warfighting development at NAS Fallon. This decision also aligns with the Maritime Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Weapons School mission to increase the lethality throughout the Joint Force, highlighted in the semiannual *Resolute Hunter*. This is the Navy’s only Joint and Coalition all-domain kill web development exercise that increases the interoperability and lethality required to build warfighters that can dominate the decision space of the 21st century fight.

If you are looking to lead, train and fly at the tactical edge, NAWDC leads Naval Aviation, and now with the MH-60R on board.

ATTENTION SQUADRON COs and PAOs

The editors of *The Hook* encourage you to share and celebrate your squadron activities, accomplishments and milestones by contributing In Marshal articles quarterly. In addition to written accounts, we are looking for outstanding, unpublished and recent high-resolution photos of squadron activities, personnel and aircraft. The better the quality of photo and article, the better you look. If you want a shot at the coveted cover photo, the image you send must be very high resolution and portrait (vertical) format. Please do not embed images in your article.

For Changes of Command, please submit the names of the new and relieved COs, a high-resolution command photo of the new CO, the date, location and full name of the command.

The Hook Submissions should be sent to:

Email: thookmagazine@gmail.com
Mail: Editor, The Hook
9696 Businesspark Ave.
San Diego, CA 92131-1643

In Marshal Deadlines:

- Spring _____ 1 February
- Summer _____ 1 May
- Fall _____ 1 August
- Winter _____ 1 November

**If you have any questions or need advice on content, send the editors an email.
We want to help your command look good and are ready to assist.**

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OUR MISSION

The A-7 Corsair II Association’s mission is to document the history of the A-7 airplane and those who flew and maintained it, to be a repository and guardian of the extensive Corsair II legacy, and to facilitate contact among former members of the A-7 community. As a non-profit corporation, our goals are to contribute to select philanthropic organizations that support our mission, and to assist museums regarding the display and history of the A-7 airplane. A major focus is to provide funds and expertise toward encouraging the education of America’s youth in science, mathematics, critical thinking, and how the A-7 played a part in the history of aviation.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the A-7 Corsair II Association is open to all former officer and enlisted personnel who, at any time, served a tour of duty in any squadron that flew the A-7, either within the U.S. or abroad, or has flown an A-7 as pilot in command. Membership is also available to those persons who served in the capacity of providing direct support to a squadron (e.g. civilian providing services to an A-7 squadron while at home or deployed). Go to www.corsair2.us to learn more, and to become a member.

COME VISIT US AT HOOK - AT OUR TABLE AND THE ATTACK READY ROOM!

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The mission of the Intruder Association is to preserve and promote the legacy of the US Navy and Marine Corps A-6 Intruder Community, to keep others informed of the A-6 aircraft mission and accomplishments and to provide for continued camaraderie among all those who flew and supported the aircraft and its squadrons, thus "Preserving the Legend of the Intruder."

You are welcomed to join the over 1,200 active members of the Intruder Association. Our membership is made up of former Pilots, Bombardier/Navigators, Maintainers, and Technical Representatives. Others may join as Associate Members. Your membership package will include welcome letter, patch, decal, and the biannual Windscreen magazine.

Our aircraft may no longer be flying, but the memories of missions flown and liberty lived will live on.

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The author William "Fritz" Klumpp

A Boyhood Dream The Nightmare of Combat

Shot Down & Rescued in Vietnam

As a Navy fighter pilot flying the F-4 Phantom in Vietnam, Fritz was shot down and rescued. He went on to fly 136 combat missions and complete 356 carrier landings including 99-night traps. His military decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, eleven awards of the Air Medal, and the Navy-Marine Corps Commendation Medal with Valor. Following combat, he was an F-4 Acceptance Test Pilot.

A Search for Truth & Redemption

Fritz shares the disillusionment, anger, and sense of betrayal so many veterans experienced, as a result of our nation's failure of leadership. With the death of that boyhood dream came a search for meaning. This search eventually led to truth, redemption, the discovery of purpose in this life, and hope for the life to come.

Buy this book today!

Find how you too can experience that same life change.

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WAVEOFFS & BOLTERS

What is It?

by Mark Aldrich

The spring issue's mystery plane was a much more difficult selection than usual. This is partly because it was a concept design only. No finished airplane ever even remotely addressed all the Navy's optimistic expectations, but the Lockheed S-3 *Viking* came the closest. I had one clear winner this time. Manny Gutsche from San Diego commented, "this was harder than most. The initial view appears cartoonish. What is it? ... [It is] the Rockwell International Model 430 Type A V/STOL [vertical/short takeoff and landing] concept aircraft." Rockwell Corporation



Rockwell International Model 430 Type A V/STOL concept aircraft.

"To address expected tactical aircraft needs 20 to 30 years in the future, the Chief of Naval Operations *Sea-Based Air Master Study Plan* issued in 1977 identified transitioning sea-based aircraft to V/STOL by 1999-2000. The Navy plan envisioned three types of aircraft. Type A was subsonic, Type B was supersonic, and Type C was to be determined later. V/STOL A was to fulfill airborne early warning, anti-submarine warfare, carrier onboard delivery, tanker, Marine assault, anti-ship surveillance and targeting missions. Type A was projected for Initial Operational Capacity between 1987 and 1992. Several contractors submitted concept designs. Thanks for the NAVAIR adventure!"

The summer mystery bird should be a little bit easier, and I expect plenty of confident responses.

Please keep your informative cards, letters and emails coming (Tailhook Association, 9696 Business Park Ave., San Diego, CA 92131-1643; thookmagazine@gmail.com). Please, no phone calls.



What is It?

- ### THE LAST CUT

 - CDR James W. Carroll, USN(Ret), Life
 - RADM Robert P. Caudill, USN(Ret), Life
 - Mr. James Corley
 - CDR Francis "Frank" Dobbertein, USN(Ret), Life
 - LT Andrian Kremm (USN Veteran), Life
 - CDR Charles A. Peterson, USN(Ret)
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RESPOT

Letter to the Editor

In the Spring 2024 issue of *The Hook*, a photo on page 17 with a F7U-3 *Cutlass* is identified as the VF-124 *Gunfighters*. This is incorrect. This aircraft operated with the VF-124 *Stingarees* on board USS *Hancock* (CVA 19) during the Far East cruise in 1955-'56. CDR James S. "Bud" Brown, then CO of VF-124, was my uncle. The patch belonged to squadron pilot LT Robert Angel.

— Steve Wells



ATLANTIC TOMCAT

A Pictorial History of the F-14 Tomcat in the Atlantic Fleet
James Geer

ATLANTIC TOMCAT: A Pictorial History of the F-14 Tomcat in the Atlantic Fleet is a limited-edition, coffee-table style book in hardback format with dust jacket. This 144-page book presents nearly 200 exceptional, large format color photographs that show the Tomcat in action with all Atlantic Fleet F-14 squadrons. Meticulously researched, the narrative provides squadron histories with a chronological account of every major Atlantic Fleet deployment. This volume is the companion book for Pacific Tomcat: A Pictorial History of the F-14 Tomcat in the Pacific Fleet.

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Find us at 'Hook 24!

OUR MISSION: TO PRESERVE THE HISTORY OF THE GREATEST FIGHTER JET THE UNITED STATES NAVY HAS EVER FLOWN

Photo: SSGT Suzanne M. Jenkins, USAF (Public Domain - National Archives 6659817). Selected photographs and articles are used under a license agreement with Northrop Grumman Systems Corporation.

A-4 Skyhawk Association
Reunion and Membership Luncheon
Hook 24 Reno Grand Sierra Resort - Aug 22-24

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Skyhawk Blue Angel'

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Keith Charlot photo
Scott Roth Pilot

A concept so strong that neither COVID nor cancer could keep it down!

Slated to open in 2025, OK3 will be a family-friendly, full-service restaurant and bar that pays tribute to the rich history of Naval Aviation.

We will once again host our annual meeting during Hook. This meeting is open to both existing investors as well as those interested in participating.

RSVPs are required. We hope you will join us!

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OK3 PENSACOLA

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 2024 - 1800
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ON DECK

An Aircrewman's View of the Battle of the Philippine Sea

by Hill Goodspeed

This summer marks the 80th anniversary of one of the great carrier battles of World War II, which included an action called the "Great Marianas Turkey Shoot" and a long-range strike against the Japanese fleet accurately described in the title of a book by LCDR J. Bryan — *Mission Beyond Darkness*. Among those that launched into uncertainty in the latter was Pittsburgh native ARM2c John Conrad Bramer Jr., flying in the rear cockpit of a VB-14 SB2C *Helldiver* off USS *Wasp* (CV 18). He almost had not made it into the Navy, the recruiters turning him down a half dozen times because he was too short and underweight. Finally accepted into the service, he was among the many who defied regulations to keep a diary, his writings and those of his fellow veterans providing valuable personal insights that inform the story of the war.

"All of us during the week of the twentieth of June 1944 were rather expectantly awaiting the moment when the Japanese Fleet would come within striking range of our forces, for after all, it would be a wonderful opportunity." With these words, Bramer began his account, capturing the eagerness of aircrew to strike Japanese carriers the day after combat air patrols knocked down scores of enemy attackers over the ships of Task Force 58 supporting the invasion of the Mariana Islands. The decision to launch came late in the day on 20 June, with U.S. Navy aircraft flying at extended ranges their pilots and aircrewmembers knew would tax their fuel reserves and necessitate night recoveries upon return to their carriers. Bramer recalled launching around 1630 and arriving over enemy forces around 1800.

"Then the fireworks started. More anti-aircraft fire came up at us from the ships below than I ever had the misfortune to dodge up until that time," Bramer wrote, noting his pilot, LTJG Albert Walraven of Dallas, Tex., picked out an oiler to attack, scoring a near miss. "The 'ack-ack' followed us for quite a while and when it stopped, I thought my worries were over ... In reality our troubles were only beginning." Japanese fighters executed several slow rolls and made their attacks on a three-plane formation that included Bremer's SB2C. "I started firing [at one of the attacking aircraft] and just when he was getting too close for comfort, two beautiful *Hellcats* dove on him and chased him off." Then a second enemy fighter attacked. "This time there were no guardian angels ... so I had to trust to luck and to my thirty calibers. After his run he broke away and another followed him in. This one was shot down by an F6F who had returned from chasing the first one."

Though the sky was now clear of enemy fighters, defensive maneuvers had burned precious fuel and Walraven announced they would probably have to ditch. Around 2105 their SB2C left the comfort of being in formation with other U.S. aircraft and descended toward the vast Pacific. "It was pitch dark, so Mr. Walraven had to land entirely by instruments and a beautiful landing it was." However, the impact of hitting the water caused Bremer's head to hit some equipment in his cockpit, breaking his nose.

Both men scrambled into their life raft in the darkness and sunrise came earlier than expected. It brought the sound of an aircraft engine and, after determining it was not an enemy aircraft, Walraven and Bramer spread their dye marker and fired off signal flares. The pilot of the TBF *Avenger* responded by dipping his wing and descending to a lower altitude. Circling the raft, he dropped a smoke light and dye marker and then flew away. A few hours later two more aircraft appeared. "As they came closer, one peeled off as if coming in for a strafing run ... so we dove into the water. As the first plane came into close range, I saw that it was an F6F *Hellcat*, so we climbed back aboard our raft and waved at him."

For a time, this pair of aircraft and then another pair circled overhead, the latter briefly disappearing and leaving the two men alone. "About twenty minutes later we saw the fighters on the horizon maneuvering as though they were trying to guide something to us." That something was USS *Seawolf* (SS 197), which pulled the downed aircrew from the water and took them aboard. Over the course of the ensuing days, Walraven and Bramer experienced life as submariners from crash dives in response to enemy aircraft overhead to silent running. A Fourth of July celebration introduced them to the submarine service's famous chow as they enjoyed "turkey, ham, mashed potatoes, ice cream and many other delicacies. Last but not least all hands were given a ration of brandy." Eventually, *Seawolf* tied up next to a submarine tender. The airmen received word they were getting off the boat after three weeks on board, and "as sort of a farewell gesture we caught twenty-seven fish and took them to the galley and had a wonderful feast of fried fish."

Walraven and Bramer were soon back aboard *Wasp* flying combat missions. After "two weeks of traveling by boat, car, jeep, ship, and airplanes." For their actions on 20 June, they received the Navy Cross and Distinguished Flying Cross, respectively. Sadly, *Seawolf* went down on 3 October 1944, off Morotai with the loss of all hands, probably the result of friendly fire after an attack by USS *Richard M. Rowell* (DE 403), the crew believing they had found a submerged Japanese submarine.

National Naval Aviation Museum



Cover of the diary kept by ARM2c John Conrad Bramer Jr. in which he penned his experiences in the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

S-3 VIKING SQUADRONS THROUGH THE YEARS

The S-3 *Viking* was a four-crew, twin-engine, turboprop-powered jet designed and produced by the Lockheed Corporation. Because of its characteristic sound, aircrew and maintainers nicknamed it the "War Hoover" after the vacuum cleaner brand. Entering regular service in 1974, the *Viking* proved to be a reliable platform and operated in many roles beyond the originally intended anti-submarine warfare mission. By the time the last Navy S-3 retired from service in 2016, the type had equipped no fewer than 18 squadrons, some of whose patches appear below.



VS-21 Redtails
1975-2005



VS-22 Checkmates
1976-2009



VS-24 Scouts
1977-2007



VS-27 Grim Watchdogs
1987-1994



VS-28 Gamblers
1976-1992



VS-29 Dragonfires
1976-2004



VS-30 Diamondcutters
1977-2007



VS-31 Topcats
1977-2008



VS-33 Screwbirds
1977-2006



VS-35 Blue Wolves
1991-2005



VS-38 Red Griffins
1978-2004



VS-41 Shamrocks
1974-2006

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