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ay You Live in Interesting Times ..." Regardless of the origin of this phrase, no year in my lifetime is better characterized by this line than 2020. It has been an eventful year, and we still have a full quarter and an election to go. Our Reno reunion was one of the casualties. In my spring column, we looked ahead with great anticipation to Hook '20 and our Naval Air Training theme. That seems so long ago.

From the Chairman

by RADM Don "D.Q." Quinn, USN(Ret)

I write this brief 24 hours after completing our first-ever virtual Hook. It was a GREAT event, ably orchestrated by our new president, CAPT Eric "Popeye" Doyle. The Air Boss led preparations on the active-duty side. He and Ellen kicked off the show with a world-class message to the entire Naval Aviation team. Our theme-centric panels followed, as did the traditional winging ceremony, which this year added a helicopter pilot for the first time. Over three days we had nearly 8,000 viewers from 61 countries, with the kickoff and flag panel the biggest draws. Popeye and Executive Director CAPT Greg "Chaser" Keithley, USN(Ret) demonstrated their agility in responding to several technological hurdles. In the end, it was a wonderful gathering, bringing together our members with those of several other Naval Aviation associations and serving as the only large gathering of Naval Aviators this year.

As always, this was a team effort among the Association, active-duty members and our industry partners. It would not have happened without "all in" efforts by all players. We are particularly grateful for the trust and support of our industry partners for an event we had never attempted before. Thank you, all.

There were extraordinary efforts by our staff, board of directors and officers. I cannot single out all who worked hard behind the scenes to

make it work, but will highlight the efforts of Chaser, Chris "Fender" Biggin and Popeye. Chaser and Fender spent many sleep-deprived nights preparing the website, videos, briefs and music. Fender is a "web design Jedi" and his work on the virtual exhibit hall was world-class. You now know the origin of his callsign as he and his friend Mike demonstrated their musical gifts in producing a stirring rendition of our national anthem that began each day of the symposium. Popeye's preparation and performance emceeing this



reality TV show was superb. I will tell you that was the result of an awful

lot of hard work. Please thank them all when you see them. We now look ahead to Hook '21 in Reno. The theme, per member requests, will be the Vietnam Air War. Discussions will include Operations Rolling Thunder and Linebacker and the work of the HAL-3 Seawolves and the VAL-4 Black Ponies in support of Special Forces and

the "Brown Water Navy." Anticipation is high after missing a year of inperson camaraderie. It is shaping up to be yet another epic Hook. As we move forward, I pass the chairmanship to ADM Bill "Shortney' Gortney, USN(Ret). He is ready and eager, and I have no doubt he will lead us to the next level. He has always been a stalwart supporter of this Association and its members and brings new energy and ideas. It has been my honor to be your chairman these past four years. I fully believe we have strengthened the Tailhook Association on the foundation provided by the giants who preceded us. I will remain dedicated and engaged throughout the remainder of my final term on the board and support our new chairman's efforts any way I can.

See you in Reno in 2021!



From the **Editor-in-Chief**

The legacies of some of the squadrons that made history in the great battles of 1941-'45 continue today, and such is the case with the VFA-32 Swordsmen, who began life as VBF-3 flying from USS Yorktown (CV 10). The squadron, which recently added a new chapter to its storied history by spending 206 consecutive days at sea on board USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2020 and is the subject of one of our periodic squadron anniversary articles. As many heard from actor Glen Powell in the video that introduced VHook '20. a signature moment in *Swordsmen* history, the attempted rescue of ENS Jesse Brown by LTJG Thomas Hudner Jr. that resulted in his receiving the Medal of Honor, is the subject of a new motion picture based on the book Devotion by Adam Makos.

Another squadron with a milestone this year is VAO-129, which redesignated from a heavy attack squadron a half a century ago, beginning





The Hook, Fall 2020

decades of service as the electronic attack community's fleet replacement squadron. The Vikings' story can be found in another extensive In Marshal section with contributions from every air wing.

Capping off our yearlong coverage of the Naval Air Training Command, a trio of Training Air Wing 6 instructors provide a look at how the VT-4 Warbucks, VT-10 Wildcats and VT-86 Sabrehawks train the newest Naval Flight Officers on board NAS Pensacola. You will be surprised at how technology provides advanced tools that prepare them for the fleet, in some cases without ever leaving the ground.



Hill Goodspeed

We have received positive feedback about our new feature On Deck, which is located on the back page of each issue. In this installment CDR Jack "Farva" Curtis, who just weeks ago retired from the Navy after commanding the VAQ-130 Zappers, recounts a last walk on the flight deck of Eisenhower following his final trap and how a sunset brought a career that had been a childhood dream full circle.

VADM DeWolfe H. "Bullet" Miller writes his final words to the membership in his "From the Air Boss" brief. Those who watched VHook '20 saw him speak about recently attending a ceremony marking the 75th anniversary of the commissioning of USS Midway (CV 41), now a floating museum in San Diego. It was the same ship on which he began his career as a carrier aviator. That fact speaks to what is truly special about the Tailhook Association, which honors, celebrates and perpetuates the unique bonds and traditions that link generations of those who have proudly worn the Wings of Gold.





his year was a Hook like no other just as 2020 has been a year like no other. What remained the same is L our deep-rooted determination that nothing will stop Naval Aviation, not even a pandemic. The spirit of Virtual Hook '20 is the spirit of our people-indomitable. Thank you to everyone at the Tailhook Association who made this

possible while protecting the health of our aviation community, and thank you to everyone who supported and attended online. Though COVID-19 has changed our operations this year, it has not changed our dedication to mission success. In true naval fashion, we have adapted and overcome.



by VADM DeWolfe H. Miller III, USN Commander. Naval Air Forces

For Ellen and me, this year was especially bittersweet. Not only did we miss seeing you all in person, we missed learning from the giants who came before us and feeling the energy generated by our live panels or on the exhibit floor. But this is also our last active-duty Tailhook symposium and my final brief in The Hook.

As Air Boss, I confirmed something I learned early in my naval career-meaningful change comes from the dedication and courage of our aviation personnel. During my nearly three-year tenure, we met the Naval Sustainment System-Aviation (NSS-A) challenge to reach 80 percent mission capable numbers in our strike fighter communities. We exceeded the goal before deadline, and never content to rest on our laurels, we are well on our way toward expanding it into all other aviation communities. NSS-A is now the way we conduct business across the fleet. During COVID-19, we even found a way to expand the NSS-A basic-level reform practices to VAW-121 at NavSta Norfolk and HSC-14 at NAS North Island using virtual methods. The result of all these achievements is that we are sustaining the highest readiness numbers we've seen across the force in more than a decade. This is a testament to all of the professionals who took up the challenge—military, DoD civilians and industry partners—and they continue to excel.

We are preparing for the future by introducing a remarkable amount of capability. During the next 10 years, Naval Aviation will begin employing dozens of new systems and platforms. These will ensure that no matter what adversary we face, our ability to project power from the sea will not be stopped. Many of you will be the operators and leaders of these powerful capabilities-a somber yet exciting opportunity.

A keystone of our advanced power projection is the Ford-class carrier, the first of which is already more than halfway through her post-delivery test and trials. She has qualified dozens of pilots and completed more than 4,000 catapult launches and arrested landings. Our current era of great power competition also demands the most advanced aircraft in the world, which we will deliver in the Air Wing of the Future. To dominate in the 21st century, it will be more networked and autonomous than any air wing in history, using advanced and layered effects across a sophisticated sensor network.

A centerpiece of the Air Wing of the Future is the F-35 Lightning II. Its stealth technology and advanced systems make it the most lethal and interoperable strike fighter ever flown. It will complement our Super Hornets, which we continue to modernize with systems like Infrared Search and Track and Block III upgrades. EA-18G Growlers will also see upgrades to advance their electronic warfare missions, and the P-8A Poseidon will evolve with Increment 3 Front End Analysis and a High-Altitude Anti-Submarine Warfare Weapon Capability. In the rotary-wing communities, sea combat helicopter squadrons will have new mine countermeasure capabilities while maritime strike helicopter squadrons will receive an anti-submarine warfare ship modification. And of course the CMV-22 Osprey is adding flexibility to carrier strike group logistics. In the near future, the MQ-25A Stingray will provide unmanned refueling and organic intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, increasing the lethality and survivability of our carrier strike groups. This is just a small glimpse of the revolutionary nature of the technologies coming into the fleet now and throughout the next decade.

Yet, with hard choices about national security for our lawmakers and calls to cut billions from the Navy budget through the next decade, future funding is uncertain. As our adversaries continue to advance and we face the challenge of peer competitors at sea and in the air, we must continue to modernize while maintaining training and readiness if we are to continue the dominance we've enjoyed for so long. Again, this all comes back to people. To make these technologies lethal, sustainable and interoperable,



we need the Sailors and Marines who VADM DeWolfe H. Miller III

can maintain and operate them to their full potential. To that end, we're expanding the use of Aviation Maintenance Experience, an advanced metric that improves on the traditional fit/fill-based method by considering enlisted Sailors' type/model/series experience and qualifications to inform assignments. The goals are to reduce the frustration in the force that comes with having good skills in the wrong billets as well as to put the right people on the right aircraft at the right time so we are ready to fly, fight and win every single day.

Taking care of our people means more than putting them in the right job. It means taking care of each other and our families on and off the flight line. That's why we're putting more emphasis than ever on diversity, inclusion and sexual assault prevention. This includes growing our diversity office staffs, providing meaningful training to combat some of the most pernicious issues in our military and becoming even more aware at the leadership level of potential discrimination, including unconscious bias in our ranks. We have been doing this work through our Culture of Excellence initiatives and in close coordination with CNO's Task Force One Navy. Courtesy of Ellen Miller



VADM and Mrs. Miller ready for a night out in front of Quarters A on board NAS North Island, Dec '19.

Everyone in our Navy and Marine Corps ranks should expect to be treated with dignity and respect, and it is our duty to ensure that is the case across our aviation forces.

This year, we also need to ensure that we're watching out for each other during the COVID-19 pandemic. All of us can make a difference by following health protection condition protocols and being the support system when someone we know needs help. We continue to provide resources to our leadership across the fleet to share with their people the availability of physical, mental, emotional and financial assistance. Leaders have stepped up hosting virtual town halls and performing more personal checks to ensure we remain socially connected while physically distanced. Continuing to have each other's backs remains a hallmark of Naval Aviation.

Naval Aviation is not a job-it's a professional calling, a community and a way of life. It involves the commitment of not only us in uniform, but also our entire families. It has been a privilege for Ellen and me to be in this with you for the last 40-plus years, and it has been my true pleasure and highest honor to have served as your Air Boss. I am leaving you in the exceptional hands of Air Boss Number 9, VADM Kenny Whitesell. He and his wife Melodye will serve Naval Aviation well. VADM Whitesell's experience across the Navy, most recently with the U.S. Pacific Fleet, is exactly what we need to lead Naval Aviation into this next phase of our history; his humility and judgement will help steer Naval Aviation through the uncertainty and challenges of tomorrow. He will join VADM Dean Peters, the Naval Air Systems Command commander, and LtGen Mark Wise, the Marine Corps' Deputy Commandant for Aviation, to head the Naval Aviation Enterprise. We could not ask for better officers to lead our beloved community.

As Ellen and I prepare to exit the ready room and depart the pattern, I offer my heartfelt gratitude and admiration for you all. There is no finer way to spend a career than in Naval Aviation, and no finer people than Naval Aviators, Sailors, Marines and their families. Together, you will YEAR MEN continue as we always have-to fly, fight, lead and win. Because, together, We Are ... Naval Aviation! God Bless.

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t's been a continuing debate for years: Is the U.S. military investing in the right tools and capabilities L to compete with China? A central question in that discussion is how U.S. naval forces should be modernized and organized to meet that challenge as China continues to develop its fleet and amass maritime power.

Former Chief of Naval Operations ADM John Richardson, USN(Ret) says the Navy faces important decisions about force structure in a budgetconstrained environment.

Washington Report:

Navy Weighs Tough Choices as China Challenge Looms

by Sandra I. Erwin

"This is a different discussion about more than ship numbers, or whether a platform is manned or unmanned or any other specific quality. The litmus test is naval power; when cuts are necessary, they should begin with things that deliver the least naval power," Richardson writes in a recent white paper published by the Center for New American Security.

"As I write this, there are almost more Navy force structure proposals than there are ships in the Navy," he says.

Richardson argues that naval forces must be built and operated in a sustainable way no matter what challenges might lay ahead. He notes

that the Navy and the other military services face complex global threats:

- China is a growing concern in the Western Pacific and increasingly globally. • Russia is a lower priority, although it presents a primary challenge in undersea warfare
- The Navy must maintain access to the Persian Gulf and counter Iran's influence in the Middle East and the Mediterranean.
- To address the North Korean threat, the Navy must support the U.S. missile defense mission.

What force sizes and capabilities are needed going forward is a discussion that is gaining urgency in the Pentagon as leaders prepare a budget request for next fiscal year amid uncertainty over the nation's political and economic outlook.

The military budget submitted to Congress in early 2020 was developed before the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The main challenges for the next presidential term of office will be to support an economic recovery and reduce the federal deficit to sustainable levels," said Todd Harrison, senior fellow and defense budget analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

With regard to the Navy's ability to fund its future needs, Harrison says the service will have to make trade-offs. Buying additional ships USN, MC2 Ruben Reed

and aircraft will become increasingly difficult as more money in the defense budget is reallocated to personnel costs and less to operations, maintenance and equipment.

"In a flat or declining budget, higher personnel costs make the trade-offs among force structure, modernization and readiness even more difficult," commented Harrison.

With these issues in mind, the Navy and congressional committees in the coming year will discuss the future of Naval Aviation forces and what they need to compete with China.

Navy officials have considered the prospect of moving to a different Naval Aviation force architecture to supplement large-deck aircraft carriers with smaller platforms operating

Marine Corps aircraft. Another potential concept is to add a smaller carrier operating an air wing consisting in part or entirely of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV).

A recent Congressional Research Service (CRS) report says there are several arguments in favor of an air wing of advanced UAVs that can operate from longer standoff ranges. One of the concerns is China's improving capabilities for detecting surface ships and attacking them with anti-ship ballistic missiles and advanced anti-ship cruise missiles.

Richardson says an unmanned carrier air wing should be given serious consideration.

"This carrier-based air wing is supported by other unmanned systems resident in the Joint force - land- and space-based systems," he says, citing the the potential for a long-range strike radius and the possibility of being armed with conventional kinetic missiles and laser weapons. "The design implications for the aircraft carrier that delivers this air wing may lead to a ship that improves combat power at reduced cost and risk to personnel."

Another issue of concern to members of Congress is the procurement, operating and maintenance costs of large aircraft carriers and their air wings, according to CRS.

The Government Accountability Office estimated that between 2005 and 2019 the Navy's four major shipyards experienced significant delays in the maintenance of 75 percent of carriers and submarines.

Richardson says no matter what the aspirations of a nation may be, its navy must be structured in a way that accounts for the total ownership cost of the force.

Warships are a major national investment, he contends, "but a nation's navy must be funded not only to buy platforms. It also needs money to raise, educate, train and retain the manpower needed to operate the ships and equipment. And last but by no means least, a navy must be funded to provide the maintenance, modernization, equipment and training required to stay safe, effective and relevant. If all this is not done comprehensively and sustainably, the ships will rust at the pier, becoming the very definition of a hollow force."



USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) and Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) during dual carrier operations in the Atlantic Ocean, 4 Jun '20.



Sandra I. Erwin

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Navigating Uncharted Waters

The beginning of this year began just like any other. Coming off another year of growth with a • fresh budget and starting preparations for another successful Hook symposium, the optimism for 2020 could not have been higher in January. However by the

end of February, we had no fewer than six different contingency plans for the year "just in case." In the following months, income dropped significantly in all areas. Hook '20 registrations were well below historic norms, and although exhibit booths were "sold out" on paper, very few booths were actually paid for as the COVID-19 pandemic uncertainty and unpredictable economy placed unprecedented pressure on members and industry partners.

From the **Executive Director**

Nonetheless, we pressed forward with planning to meet in Reno in September. By July, the writing was on the wall and we were down to two options when we briefed the Air Boss; do a virtual Hook or cancel altogether. The latter was never a real option. Once decided, we had roughly seven weeks to put something together.

Having never done this before, we were in uncharted waters and had to figure out what exactly our expectations were for a virtual event. We determined that Virtual Hook '20 would ensure that we did not have a gap year, but more importantly, we wanted to provide a platform for Naval Aviation at a time when most events had been canceled or significantly restricted.

Our mindset was to make it inclusive for all Naval Aviation and industry partners, present it live and make it interactive. The safer alternative would have been to simply record everything and just hit play. Doing a live two-day production is fraught with perils, as you saw, but it was a risk we were willing to take.

Overall, the real-time engagement in the virtual exhibitor hall, panel sessions and briefs were worth the effort. It's fair to say that we accomplished what we set out to do, but VHook '20 was never intended to replace the actual symposium. Bringing together generations of carrier aviators, family, friends and supporters cannot be replicated virtually. There's no replacing the interaction that takes place in one-on-one engagement with leadership, sharing experiences and stories, interacting with exhibitors, the camaraderie of the Bug Roach Mixer, the JO call with the Air Boss, the hospitality suites or the banquet dinner, just to name a few.

VHook is not the same as Hook, so if any of you are curious as to whether or not we will do this again, my answer is only in a "break glass in case of emergency" situation. We will plan to incorporate some of the successes of this year's version in terms of the user experience, but for planning purposes, circle 9-11 September 2021, on next year's calendar now and plan on joining us at The Nugget Casino Resort in Reno.

Thanks for Your Feedback and Support!

Like so many of you, throughout my Navy career I took a lot of mental notes along the way in the form of advice and leadership lessons. As a young enlisted Sailor before I earned my commission, my division chief what happens" and "a simple thank you goes a long way."

Your response to this unique event validated such ageless advice on both counts. Carrier aviation is known to breed a community that sets high expectations and is groomed not to fail. When VHook '20 concluded, the number of Navy leaders, Tailhook members and industry reps who cared enough to reach out and say thanks, despite it not being perfect, was eye-watering. Your thanks went a long way with me, the staff, the board of directors and officers, and it will not be forgotten. We appreciate your input and support.

Moving Forward

Thus far, 2020 has been the year that keeps on giving, and not in a good way. Every one of us has been impacted to some degree, and your Association and Tailhook Educational Foundation are no exceptions. The

staff here has seen a lot of firsts, such as closing the doors to the headquarters for over seven weeks, working from home, executing a virtual Hook and finding ways to make budget despite significant fiscal impacts to revenue. Through it all we've managed to keep our heads above water, and I expect to meet our budget through the remainder of the year.

However, uncertainty remains on the horizon, and if the light at the end of the tunnel happens to be a train, so be it. We'll be ready because we've shown the ability to find a way to succeed and we are surrounded with strong leadership. Every former Tailhook president

(including me) knows what it takes to



CAPT Greg Keithley, USN(Ret)

emcee at Hook, and what CAPT Eric "Popeye" Doyle did virtually was phenomenal. Nice job hanging in there, Popeye. After that, Hook '21 in Reno next year will be a walk in the park! We've also been lucky to be led by RADM Don "D.Q." Quinn, USN(Ret) as our chairman these last four years. His guidance and mentoring has been invaluable to us all, especially me. With ADM Bill "Shortney" Gortney, USN(Ret) assuming the helm as chairman, we are well positioned for the future. We were also fortunate to have the exceptional leadership and support from team Air Boss VADM DeWolfe "Bullet" and Ellen Miller. Thank you both for a lifetime of inspiration, and we wish you the best upon retirement and in your future adventures.

Moving forward, all we ask of each Tailhook member is to remain engaged. Please keep your membership in good standing, consider converting to a Life Membership, let us know if your contact information changes and challenge those you know to become members. Let us endeavor to stay strong and keep forging ahead.





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



The Naval Air Training History panel broadcasts from the National Naval Aviation Museum during VHook '20.



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Congratulations to Tailhook Association (THA) Executive Director CAPT Greg "Chaser" Keithley, USN(Ret), the THA board of directors and staff for planning, creating, organizing and executing an amazing Virtual Hook '20. We would much rather have gathered with you in Reno for our traditional Hook symposium. However, Chaser and team produced the next best thing with VHook '20. Special recognition to Chris Biggin, our design and web manager, for his creativity and hard work with the videos, building and operating the VHook '20 website, including the exhibitor hall with virtual booths and creating the various short set pieces you saw during the symposium. Bravo Zulu and exceptionally well done to all those involved in organizing and executing this innovative alternative to our traditional Hook symposium.

Congratulations to our Tailhook Educational Foundation (TEF) supporters as well. Despite the various and unusual challenges we all faced this year, your financial support to TEF never wavered. Your steadfast generosity empowered TEF to fund 109 scholarships worth \$362,000 in grants awarded to Naval Aviation legacy students. This is a 15 percent increase over the amount awarded last year. And all of these scholarships were awarded at a level of \$3,000 or greater, an increase of \$500 over our minimum grants from previous years.

Three of these scholarships were sponsored by THA and awarded to special case student applicants, who received scholarships because their parent-sponsor passed away while on active duty. The THA board elected to start the special case scholarship awardee program in 2020 and will continue it in the future.

Our supporters' contributions this year, including your VHook '20 donations, sponsored TEF's newest perennial (permanent) scholarship honoring former Chief of Naval Operations ADM Thomas Hayward, USN(Ret). This latest TEF scholarship will yield \$3,000 per year to a deserving student in perpetuity. On behalf of the THA and TEF boards of directors and our entire staff, please accept our gratitude for your diligent support to TEF so far this year, and especially during our unprecedented VHook '20 virtual fundraiser.

Those who participated virtually on 11-12 September had the opportunity to hear personal testimonials from two of our four-year TEF scholarship recipients, Faith Rovenolt and Joseph Tanaka. These amazing young people provided their own stories on how the TEF grants you sponsor directly impact their lives in school and outside activities.

Additionally you heard from CAPT Herb Ladley, USN(Ret), now nearly 102 years young. As the USS Langley Association's president in 1995, he provided TEF with the funds to sponsor our first student grant.

To learn more about our 2020 scholarship program, we invite you to visit our TEF awardee and donor webpages. There you will find information about the 109 awarded scholarships and their sponsors as well as this year's awardees. You can also review a list of this year's loyal and committed TEF donors, who enable our scholarship program to thrive and grow each year.

Tailhookers, TEF continues to need your support during this extraordinary and lean fundraising year. We too are feeling the strain of COVID-19's restrictions and other impacts. We ask you to please continue your steady support of TEF by visiting our homepage and selecting "Donate Now" to choose from a myriad of ways to make a donation. Of note, we are seeing an increase in our supporters who elect to use the *GiveDirect* option to sign up for recurring monthly donations. This option remains one of the easiest and most balanced ways to donate throughout the year.

Finally as always in November, you will receive a formal written request to support TEF from our board chairman, RDML J.J. Quinn USN(Ret). This letter will provide you with details on our 2020 end of year (EOY) fundraising campaign and information on the numerous ways you can top off your generous support to the foundation. We thank you in advance for your continued patronage through our EOY appeal and your

assistance throughout our TEF 2020 fundraising air plan.

Again, many mahalos to the Tailhook staff, both boards of directors and officers, our industry partners and most importantly, all of our resolute supporters for your sustained financial backing during a most challenging year.

THA and TEF are your teams. We continue our mission as your Tailhook wingmen flying in combat spread to support you. Thank you all for your membership and nonstop encouragement. We look forward to

seeing all of you at Hook '21 where we will recognize and honor those who participated in the Vietnam War air campaign to include all the heroes from *Operations*

Rolling Thunder and Linebacker. Seasonal and holiday blessings to you all.



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



TEF's newest perennial scholarship honors former Chief of Naval Operations ADM Thomas Hayward, USN(Ret) pictured at the far right with other VF-51 Screaming Fagles' aviators during the Korean War





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THEY SAY THE SKY IS THE LIMIT? E DON'T DO

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Question: Who has won more Army-Navy football games, the cadets or midshipmen?

THE ARMY-NAVY GAME

T nlike most college football rivalries, the Army-Navy game has come to involve much more than the alumni of West Point and Annapolis, extending to the respective services.

There were lesser-known Army-Navy games under the auspices of the Inter-service Sports Council, which was established shortly after World War II. There were many enlisted Sailors and soldiers who had not gone to college but could play the sport. The games tended to be on the rough side fueled by inter-service rivalry.

Aviation students with talent, many of them former college or even In anticipation of the game, many aircraft carrier decks and aircraft professional athletes, oftentimes received orders to Whiting Field and routinely display the message "Beat Army!" T-28s to keep them in the Pensacola area to play sports, before getting their choice, grades permitting, for advanced. LT Roger Staubach JOYSTICK was color blind so joined the Supply Corps after his storied career at After receiving a normal cut in an F6F Hellcat while recovering on the Naval Academy and, following a shore tour in Vietnam, received board a light carrier, the pilot allowed the nose to drop, which brought the orders to NAS Pensacola so he could play with the station football team, plane back into a three-point attitude. Just as the plane hit the deck, the stick went limp and the tail flew up. "I was rolling down the the Goshawks. Those years obviously did not harm the future Dallas deck with very good visibility, but no chance of catching a Cowboys quarterback, although when he started his pro career in 1969, he was a 27-year-old rookie. wire. A quick glance into the cockpit told me that the plastic



words that take on special meaning each December when the midshipmen and cadets square off on the gridiron.

Midshipmen and cadets played the first Army-Navy football game on 29 November 1890, on "The Plain" at West Point. Navy had been playing organized football since 1879 and defeated the newly established Army team by a score of 24–0. Each of the 271 members of the Corps of Cadets contributed 52 cents to pay half of Navy's traveling costs for the 1890 game.

Twice during World War I, in 1917 and 1918, the games were canceled on orders from the War Department.

Going into both the 1944 and 1945 games, Army and Navy were ranked one and two nationally. Army won both games.

Only six Army-Navy games have been held on the campuses of either academy. Two of those games were in 1942 and 1943 during World War II.



grip on top of the stick had slipped off as I came back on the stick to cushion the landing. The rest of the stick was somewhat forward, being held only by the trigger, bomb and rocket wiring. I grabbed that 'stump,' brought the tail down and engaged the number No. 8 wire and barrier.

"I was quite put out until someone in the ready room stated, 'It could have happened in the groove!""

BOUNCES

- The word "joystick" is never to be used in the Royal Naval Air Service. [Command directive, circa 1917]
- Is it true that most of the T-34s in primary had fiberglass patches on the back seat glare shield where instructors kept grabbing to hold on?
- "I'm waiting to be told how cobras, hooks or vectored thrust help in combat. They're great at air shows, but zero energy is a fighter pilot's nightmare. Shoot your opponent down, and his number two will be on your tail thinking it's his birthday — a target hanging there in the sky with zero energy." [Ned Firth, Eurofighter pilot]
- BOOMER BOMBER BADGERS BEAR was the photo caption for a picture of a VA-165 A-6 Intruder intercepting a Tu-95 Bear.
- Every ground school class includes one idiot who at 1555 asks a question requiring a 20-minute answer.
- When asked whether his book Jarhead about the first Gulf War was fact or fiction, author Anthony Swofford responded, "I don't know. It's what I remember."
- The U.S. Navy had 65 belly landings in six months! Reviewing these mishaps between July and December 1948, 20 forgot to lower the wheels, 29 involved "inadequate attempts to lower wheels," and 16 raised wheels instead of flaps after landing.

REPLIES

- Coming through the 90 degree position for recovery in an A-6 Intruder during awful weather and a horrific sea state, the bombardier/navigator said, "Don't look at the stern, I just saw the screws!" The pilot's squeaked reply was, "Too laaate."
- Shot down over Vietnam, a pilot experienced a hairy helicopter rescue. Hiding in trees and surrounded by oncoming enemy troops, he only managed to get one arm into the rescue sling. Next thing he knew, the helo was at 2,000 feet. When later asked how long he could have hung on, he replied, "About two weeks!"

WHO'S THE BOSS?

Many years ago, I was part of the management team at a hospital. We would meet once a month in the auditorium for a meeting chaired by our hospital chief executive officer (CEO). If the CEO was running late, someone else would take over until he arrived, and on one occasion, I was the moderator. We did the "old business" thing and right in the middle of that the CEO arrived. Not really thinking about it, upon seeing him I turned to the crowd and yelled, "ATTENTION ON DECK!" Many of the managers looked confused, but several immediately jumped up! These former Sailors and Marines understood the command, but that was not the best part. The CEO cracked up and yelled, "AS YOU WERE!" I'd worked with this man for 20 years and had no idea that he was, once upon a time, an LCDR in the blackshoe Navy!

After that, whenever I saw the CEO in the hall or in a meeting, he would always say, "Howdy, shipmate!" And I would always respond with, "Howdy, skipper!" That always made him smile.

SHHH. THEY'LL NEVER NOTICE

Two student pilots were on a gunnery flight in basic training with their instructor flying in the tow plane. After a high side run, one joined up on the other, but decided he had a little too much interval. In an effort to close in, he passed under and ahead of the other plane and lost sight of it. As he pulled up, the rudder of his plane struck the starboard wing and pitot tube of the other SNJ Texan. Both pilots felt a slight jar, but saw no apparent damage to their planes and consequently did not inform their instructor.

Each made another gunnery run, after which the instructor told the flight to return to base because he considered their formation flying too erratic. It was while returning to base that the instructor first learned of the midair collision. One plane had a dent in the starboard wing and a damaged pitot tube while the other had a badly damaged rudder, which could not be moved.



View of an F6F Hellcat cockpit showing the plastic grip atop the control stick. In the hands of Naval Aviators, the Grumman-built fighter produced more aces than any single aircraft type of World War II.



An A-6E Intruder of the VA-95 Green Lizards in a position normally reserved for fighters escorting a Soviet Tu-95 Bear, 1982. This Intruder is now an artificial reef in the Atlantic off the Florida coast.



With its propeller tips bent, an F6F-5 Hellcat assigned to NAS Anacostia rests on the grass of a Wilmington, N.C., airfield in the aftermath of one of the frequent belly landings Naval Aviation News reported in 1948.





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Grampaw Pettibone says:

I've always admired people who could keep secrets, but you fellows are carrying things too far. That last gunnery run might well have been fatal for either of you, since one plane was minus an indication of altitude and airspeed, and the other had a jammed rudder.

Midair collisions aren't confidential. At least as far as your instructor is concerned whenever you damage an airplane, either on the ground or in the air be sure to report it promptly. If you don't, you have your neck out a mile.

P.S. just in case you're careless about your own neck, don't forget that you may not be the next person to fly that particular plane. -Adapted from Naval Aviation News, June 1949

> Some birds won't obey civil regs On days when they feel a bit frisky They flat hat and buzz Navy planes And don't even know that it's risky. But be kind to our web footed friends For a duck may be somebody's mother And besides if one busts up your plane You can't make him buy you another. *—from* Naval Aviation News, June 1949





NIGHT LIGHT

I was waving a recovery one night on board USS Constellation (CVA 64) when an A-4 pilot called in that he had a hung flare. Once the airplane trapped, the flare came loose and skidded over the angle deck into the sea, igniting underwater. The ship drove over the flare, which created a massive glow in its wake. I had to wave off a couple guys because they settled as they came over the glow in the water. It was real spooky.

-CAPT Lonny "Eagle" McClung, USN(Ret)

DUMB

An F-4 Phantom II was on the waist cat of USS Nimitz (CVN 68). The junior officers came up with the sporty idea of placing the gear handle up for the cat shot.

Unfortunately a troubleshooter, while checking out the jet prior to launch, decided to cycle the weight on gear switch. The F-4 settled down gently on the port pylon. The troubleshooter made it out with his eyes as big as saucers. There were no personnel injuries or damage to the F-4, just a few choice words from the Air Boss and a very unhappy squadron skipper.

-CAPT Darryl "Specs" Stubbs

BITTER BIRDS

Established as a Naval Air Reserve fighter squadron in November 1949, VF-884 was called to active duty in July 1950. Based at NAS Olathe, Kan., the squadron may have included University of Kansas alumni who adapted the Jayhawk mascot for the squadron patch. With its menacing look and brandishing a club, the Jayhawk embodied the fierceness expected of a fighter squadron insignia, perhaps overshadowing the nickname *Bitter Birds* reflecting the feelings of squadron personnel about their Korean War activation.

The Bitter Birds became VF-144 in 1953 and gave up the cynical nickname shortly afterward. In 1959 the squadron was redesignated VA-52 and adopted the name Knightriders. A variation of the Bitter Birds insignia survives in a fighter squadron of the Argentine Navy. Jim Sullivar



USS Constellation (CV 64) underway in the deep blue Pacific with McDonnell Douglas, Sikorsky and Grumman Ironworks birds arrayed on the flight deck. National Naval Aviation Museum



Flight-deck personnel ready a pair of VF-74 Bedevilers F-4J Phantom IIs for launch from USS Nimitz (CVN 68), 1976.





NEVER TRUST AN AUTOPILOT

Memories of flying in the 1920s from Joseph Eaton, Naval Aviator #184: "I was assigned to experimental duty at a station on the Potomac River 60 miles south of Washington, D.C. [Naval Proving Ground Dahlgren, Va.] developing a small airplane that could carry a torpedo. The major part of the work was for the gyroscope. They were having troubles and it would usually fail after 30 minutes. When it failed the airplane would go into a spin. The pilot would then have to take over as soon as the gyro quit. The cause of the error turned out to be the weight of a tiny silver wire that led from the electrical circuit to the motor in the gyroscope. Their work did help develop the automatic pilot.

"The chief engineer on the flying torpedo was Carl Norden, who would later develop the famous Norden bombsight.

"During this time, six of us had been living in a cottage on the lower proving ground. There was no entertainment, no town. We got lonely and decided to have a party. We invited some girls. I had to make an experimental flight before the party. I took off and at 500 feet on automatic control stood up to watch the girls come up the road. The autopilot quit after 5 minutes this time, and I spun in. The engine was driven into the ground. I went through the gas tank and ended up where the motor had been. I spent the summer in the hospital. That was the end of my experimental work."

PADDLE'S PERSPICACITY

As the lead LSO, I was doing the ready room tour debriefing the last night recovery. We had an A-7 do a "taxi 1-wire." (Ed Note: This involves recovering with all wheels on deck before engaging the No. 1 wire.) I walked into the SLUF ready room and said, "Who the hell was in xxx?" The two-star admiral, the carrier group commander, said "Me." So I said, "Right, sir, it wasn't that bad." He replied, "Bullshit, it was scary!"

PHANTOM IN THE SAND

VMF-122 received the McDonnell FH-1 Phantom in November 1947, becoming the first Marine squadron to employ jet aircraft. During exercises in the Caribbean, two of the *Phantoms*, while en route to NavSta

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Roosevelt Roads from NavSta Guantanamo Bay, had both engines fail within moments of each other.

The first plane, after gliding some 20 miles, made a wheels-down, dead stick landing on a dirt strip at Los Romana in the Dominican Republic. Piloted by 1stLt Shirley Reese, the FH-1 was able to proceed without further trouble after a field overhaul of the fuel system and fuel cells.

The second plane glided some 60 miles (from 20,000 feet) before its pilot, MSgt Lytton Blass, landed on a sandy beach. He chose a wheels-up landing to prevent a disastrous somersault from the wheels catching in the soft sand at 70 mph.





A VA-22 Fighting Redcocks A-7E Corsair II catches a wire during recovery on board USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63), 3 Aug '79.

The Marines lacked equipment to jack the plane up, so they dug holes in the sand, permitting the wheels to be lowered. Then they cleared short runways from the holes to level ground making it possible to pull the craft off its belly.

Two items had to be taken care of before the plane was ready to fly, an overhaul of the fuel system and changing the inboard flaps. Both jobs could be accomplished in the field. Engine damage was negligible.

The *Phantom* required JATO to become airborne. The proper type bottles were not obtainable, requiring modifications to the only available units. The JATO bottles weighed approximately 200 pounds each. The modifications called for cutting off half the base used as a stand and adding a two-in. extension on the forward release lug. The combination of the two allowed the JATO units to fit and made a positive release possible.

The plane was now ready to take off with MSgt Blass again at the controls. The two heavy JATO units had moved the center of gravity considerably to the rear, especially since the plane carried a light fuel load of just 900 pounds with nothing in the nose compartment except the guns. Blass had difficulty keeping the nose down for takeoff. The main gear left the ground after about 100 feet, but the tail skid continued to drag. The *Phantom* was completely airborne after 320 feet with sufficient speed to remain in the air. The JATO bottles were dropped after they were expended and the plane proceeded to Ciudad Trujillo to refuel.

A thorough check at Guantanamo Bay revealed that excessive water in the fuel was responsible for the near disasters of the two jets.

The cause of the landings was not as puzzling to the Dominican natives as the takeoffs. Obviously they said, the planes could not remain airborne — they had lost their propellers.

Answer: Navy and Army have faced off 123 times. Navy has 61 wins, while Army has 55 victories. There have been seven ties. Navy won 14 Army-Navy games in a row from 2002 to 2015, the longest winning streak in the history of the series. The largest victory was in 1973: Navy 51 Army 0.

Chock 'em, chain 'em and historical asides to the Catwalk.

Mark Aldrich collection



FH-1 Phantoms of VMF-122, which under the command of famed World War II ace LtCol Marion Carl was the Corps' first jet squadron, pass over Fort El Morro in San Juan, P.R., in the late 1940s.









ight now, somewhere on the Seven Seas, an E-2 Hawkeye crew launches from the deck of an aircraft carrier. They quickly establish communications with a P-8 *Poseidon* flying nearby and, complemented by the MQ-4C Triton autonomously operated system, provide continuous surveillance for the area. They also receive real time data from a section of expeditionary EA-18G Growlers supporting Joint operations from a nearby airfield. The E-2 takes the information





DoD Sot James K. McCann

and feeds it back to a strike package on the deck of the aircraft carrier, which is preparing for an upcoming launch. That strike package comprises F/A-18F Super Hornets and Growlers, standing ready, if and when called upon to deliver lethal naval air power from the sea. All these platforms have something in common: They all have NFOs flying in them, trained to operate the weapons and communication systems and lead the execution of the mission.

USN, MC2 Sean Castelland

USN, MC2 Juan S. Sua



LTJG Amelia Panek manages navigation and communication on board a P-8A Poseidon during a mission over the Mediterranean Sea, 23 Oct '19. Hours of Multi Crew Simulator instruction in training prepares SNFOs for service in a variety of platforms.

While Student Naval Aviators receive instruction at a variety of locations across the southern region of the United States, the next generation of NFOs trains at a single location. The path to their Wings of Gold runs through Training Air Wing (TRAWING) 6 located in the heart of the "Cradle of Naval Aviation" on board NAS Pensacola, Fla. It consists of three training squadrons: the VT-4 Warbucks, VT-10 Wildcats and VT-86 Sabrehawks. These commands are the U.S. Navy's only squadrons dedicated to training the next generation of Navy, Marine Corps and international NFOs, who will operate maritime, airborne command and control and tactical aircraft in a multitude of dynamic environments. CAPT Scott "Mongo" Janik, USN

VT-10 Wildcats

Established in 1960, VT-10 conducts primary and intermediate flight training for NFOs. It is here that officers who put on the green and white squadron patch begin their training to become warfighters capable of employing our nation's most modern naval aircraft and weapons systems. The squadron annually completes 7,000 sorties totaling well over 14,000 flight hours with its fleet of 43 aircraft.

VT-10 student NFOs (SNFO) attend ground school and train in flight simulators before taking to the skies in the T-6A Texan II, which the squadron has flown since 2002. Students first complete familiarization flights in the aircraft before progressing to instrument, visual navigation and formation flights.

Instructors bring expertise from all pipelines of Naval Aviation to VT-10, providing SNFOs with a breadth of knowledge and valuable insight, preparing them for challenges they will face in the future. One instructor at VT-10 is back for a second tour in the squadron.

"It is a privilege to be at VT-10 a decade later, training our future warfighters," said LT Chandler "Coach" Hasemeyer, a former NFO and current instructor pilot.

EP-3E Aries pilot LT Robert "Waldo" Allen echoed Hasemeyer's excitement. "I enjoy coming to work each day, passing on the valuable lessons I learned as a mission commander working alongside many Naval Flight Officers in the fleet."

Instructors take the standard training curriculum and bring it to life sharing their fleet experience and making training blocks more memorable. ENS Xavier Ortiz of the Bronx, N.Y., is a 2019 graduate of the United States Naval Academy and currently a SNFO at VT-10. "At VT-10, I am gaining a solid foundation learning the fundamentals of aviation that I will use not only in follow-on training at VT-4 or VT-86, but also for my entire career." Ortiz said. "Having learned the dangers of complacency, I am constantly studying, refining my skills. I have gained confidence, increased my situational awareness and am learning to direct and take ownership of the mission."

Upon completion of primary flight training, SNFOs are selected to continue training at either VT-4 or VT-86, depending on their platform selection. Selection is based on the needs of the Navy, student performance and student preferences.





VT-4 Warbucks

Those SNFOs who select the P-8, E-2, EP-3 or E-6B Mercury become Warbucks and train in the Undergraduate Military Flight Officer program. The curriculum provides students with the knowledge, skill and preparation required to operate the nation's most advanced aircraft while reducing total training costs by leveraging emerging technology.

VT-4 is the Navy's only all-simulator, advanced flight training program, preparing SNFOs for the complex problems facing the warfighter today and tomorrow. To accomplish this, the Warbucks use state-of-the-art Multi Crew Simulators (MCS) to enable SNFOs to complete a rigorous course of study and application that will prepare them for their follow-on fleet squadron. Born of a need to bridge the gap between T-6 primary training and the fleet replacement squadrons (FRS) after sundown of the T-39 Sabreliner in 2014, the MCS provides experiences not possible in actual training aircraft.

"The level of training we do in the simulator would require fleets of ships, submarines and squadrons of aircraft to match," VT-4 Commanding Officer CDR Sean "Starfish" Newby said. "These young officers walk out of here understanding how we fight from the sea and from the air. Sure, they are missing some airmanship building opportunities, but so far the trade-off seems to work."

The MCS itself is a two-monitor, touch-screen tactical plot that can simulate all types of radar, electro-optical/infrared camera imagery, data and reconnaissance. link, identification friend or foe, satellite communication, VHF/UHF Additionally, VT-4 is creating an undergraduate syllabus for and HF communications. Controlled by two instructors seated behind operators of the MQ-25 Stingray, the Navy's first unmanned, carrierthe student, the workstation accepts real-time input allowing entities, based platform, and is expecting training to commence in Fiscal communications, data and even faults to occur at any point through Year 2022. instructor manipulation or prior created scripting. Additionally the MCS Beyond bringing cutting-edge tactical principles to SNFOs in a next generation simulator, VT-4 aims to bridge the gap between SNFOs and can be "linked" to allow multiple students to operate as if they are working together on one aircraft with one filling the role of Combat Information the fleet-ready warfighter. As former students make their Center Officer and the other serving as the Air Control Officer in the case way back to VT-4 from fleet squadrons, lessons learned are woven into the fabric of the squadron. of the E-2 curriculum.

Recently winged NFO ENS Nate Belch reflected on his recent simulator events.

"The heavy emphasis on crew resource management is important to us as students since it is our first opportunity to see it used between multiple crew members," Belch said.

Working alongside partner-nation students from Germany and Norway, classes of five to seven SNFOs complete roughly six months of training consisting of simulator events, classroom instruction and computer-aided instruction (CAI) before earning their Wings of Gold.

Ensign Timo Langen of the German Navy related, "Our syllabus offers us a perfect balance between theoretical CAI lessons and simulator events, which are similar or maybe even identical to scenarios we can expect in the real world."

Using a multipronged learning approach, VT-4 graduates more than 150 winged NFOs each year for FRSs at NAS Norfolk (VAW-120), NAS Jacksonville (VP-30) and Tinker AFB in Oklahoma City (VQ-7). Students receive a general introduction to the simulator along with equipment and navigation familiarization before breaking into platformspecific syllabi

While the E-2 students begin to focus on airborne early warning and air intercept control, the maritime patrol and reconnaissance students learn fundamentals of anti-submarine warfare and intelligence, surveillance

Building on the Navy's concept of live, virtual and constructive training, VT-4 now uses simulators to provide students with operationalstyle experiences at an earlier stage than ever before. Recently returned from a fleet tour in the VAW-123 Screwtops, instructor LT Ben "Penguin" Merino provided his assessment. "The MCS is very user friendly, and can create realistic, complex scenarios to drive home learning points. I can create multigroup adversary presentations for the students before they even set foot in an E-2, giving them a depth of knowledge the FRS was not receiving before."

VT-86 Sabrehawks

SNFOs selected to fly the EA-18G Growler or F/A-18F Super Hornet move to the Advanced Strike syllabus at VT-86 after completing the curriculum at VT-10. This is a rigorous course of study dedicated to training future NFOs to operate the military's tactical aircraft.

"The training we do here at VT-86 is crucial to the development of future NFOs," VT-86 Operations Officer LCDR Andrew "Puker" Bellina said. "We have to ensure that each student we graduate is capable of one day becoming a mission commander of multimillion dollar aircraft while conducting combat missions in hostile environments. We know that after leaving here, one day these students could be dropping live bombs on actual targets, defending aircraft carriers around the world from other threat aircraft or flying in dangerous countries with surface-to-air missiles tracking on their jet. The training we provide helps prepare them for that."

The training at VT-86 is divided into several phases including familiarization (FAM), strike (STK), close air support (CAS), basic fighter maneuvering (BFM) and all-weather intercepts (AWI). All phases of training begin with ground school instruction where students complete CAI lessons and receive lectures taught by professional, seasoned aviators. Students proceed to simulator events to prepare them for conducting similar events in the air. During all phases, students are held to high, unyielding standards with regard to safety and professionalism. LT Stephen "TWIG" Smith

In the FAM phase, the students are introduced to the T-45C Goshawk jet trainer and learn to safely operate the aircraft according to the NATOPS manual. Instructors introduce VT-86 standard operating procedures, and students conduct a multitude of events intended to familiarize them with the aircraft systems and equipment.

"I've always wanted to fly jets for the Navy," ENS Ryan Shea, a Sabrehawks student, said. "I had to work really hard all the way through primary to make it to advanced. It's a lot of studying and prepping. The instructors are very hard on us and don't accept a lot of mistakes. It's a little nerve-wracking the first time you climb into the T-45, but it's also very rewarding knowing I've made it this far."

USAF, Sen Airman Adam R. Shanks



In the rear cockpit of the T-45C, SNFOs hone the skills that will one day make them key elements of mission success in strike platforms like the F/A-18F Super Hornet and EA-18G Growler.





Following the FAM phase, the VT-86 STK syllabus introduces students to the air-to-surface mission in which modern tactical crews must excel. Here, they learn aspects such as accurately and efficiently delivering weapons to a specific target while remaining inside an assigned time-ontarget window and leading a section of Goshawks through rugged terrain while defending against surface-to-air missile threats.

The CAS syllabus next introduces the SNFO to the aspects of leading a division of four jets to an area where friendly forces are in proximity to enemy forces and have requested air support. SNFOs learn how to attack a target in a variety of environmental conditions while working with simulated friendly assets on the ground.

After completing both the STK and CAS phases, students are introduced to the air-to-air environment, beginning with BFM. In BFM, they experience the dynamic, high-stress scenario of engaging an aggressive threat aircraft in close proximity. This phase of training helps develop the SNFOs' core tactical skills and increases their confidence in maneuvering the aircraft throughout its flight envelope.

Finally, in AWI VT-86 introduces SNFOs to air intercepts and how fighter aircraft maintain air superiority in the presence of enemy assets. They learn how to use their radars and other friendly airborne assets to locate threats, gain a positional advantage, control intercept geometry, close with a potential threat aircraft and achieve a weapons launch acceptability region while denying the enemy a weapon engagement zone. The aircrew strive to arrive at the merge with a positional or energy advantage in order to successfully engage an enemy using BFM skills learned and honed in the previous phase. All phases of training are strategically written and constantly assessed to ensure students train to the most up-to-date tactics.

The Sabrehawk stable of T-45Cs was recently upgraded with the Virtual Mission Training System (VMTS). This new training tool incorporates a synthetic radar and radar warning receiver system in the aircraft, allowing instructors to provide focused strike fighter training to SNFOs. The system contains a processor and datalink that works with the aircraft navigation system to provide a virtual radar presentation that corresponds to where the aircraft is actually flying. Through the datalink, an instructor manning a special ground station can monitor a student's performance real-time and control the scenario, inserting surface-to-air and



air-to-air threats into the virtual displays.





Instructors flying SNFOs in the T-45C provide invaluable experience that prepares the young officers for the fleet.

"Our advanced NFO training is more sophisticated than it was years ago," VT-86 Commanding Officer CDR Eric Reeves said. "With the advent of VMTS, SNFOs develop the skills they will need to successfully operate more complex weapons systems in the fleet. The knowledge they acquire here provides the foundation for them to become lethal airborne warriors adept at employing kinetic and nonkinetic effects from the world's most advanced aircraft."

The VMTS syllabus is modeled after FRS syllabi to develop the exact skills required by today's fleet aviators. The radar presented to the SNFOs is similar to those they will operate in their respective fleet squadrons, and the hand controllers they use are very similar to those in the Super Hornet and Growler. VMTS provides the added benefit of allowing for detailed debriefs where instructors review recordings of the flight with students and critique their performance in radar mechanics, flight geometry, communications and other disciplines critical to a successful tactical aviator.

VT-86 wings more than 120 NFOs annually and has provided the United States and allied forces with more than 7,300 tactical aviators qualified to fly various aircraft around the globe. The specialized training SNFOs receive at VT-86 prepares them for the rigorous follow-on training they will be exposed to once they reach their respective FRS, where they learn to fly and fight their respective fleet platforms.

Maintaining The Edge

Being an NFO is challenging and there is little margin for error. TRAWING 6 continues to do its job preparing young women and men to excel as leaders and warriors in the fleet, a task not taken lightly by professional instructor NFOs and pilots. Graduates have to be the best. We want to instill in the mindset of every community wearing Wings of Gold that having an NFO in the aircraft will increase that platform's lethality. Ours is a proud history of producing NFOs, from the radar intercept officers of the F-4 Phantom II and F-14 Tomcat to the bombardier navigators in the A-6 Intruder and electronic countermeasures officers of the EA-6B Prowler. We continue that history today for the current fleet while we look to the future and what skills will be required of warfighters in 2050.





Today's NFOs continue the proud legacy of those who preceded them, officers like LT (later RADM) Lyle Bull pictured receiving the Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism as an A-6 Intruder bombardier navigator over North Vietnam.



The author Thad Dupper aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln



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A towering cloud of smoke signals the end of Yamato, her sinking on 7 Apr '45, a symbolic passing of the age of the battleship and the ascendency of Naval Aviation during World War II.

he attack on the fabled Japanese super battleship *Yamato* 75 years ago was the last carrier-launched aerial torpedo attack by the U.S. . Navy during World War II. It marked the end of a type of aerial tactic that for a comparatively short span of time changed naval warfare. A fresh look back at that final sortie using action reports and observations from Yamato's surveyed wreck reveal that some results were greater than realized, while other attacks less effective. All were carried out fearlessly in the face of considerable anti-aircraft (AA) fire and poor weather conditions.

Background

By April 1945, with the exception of the sinking of two Japanese ships off Indochina in January 1945, it had been months since Task Force (TF) 58's TBM Avengers had last used torpedoes against a Japanese warship. This was even the case in the ambitious raids on Kure to attack surviving Imperial Japanese Navy units in March. The concentrated AA fire and confined conditions in that harbor made torpedo attacks too dangerous.

However, as the fast carriers conducted strikes supporting the invasion of Okinawa on 1 April, scuttlebutt pointed to an imminent sortie of the Japanese fleet's remaining strength, the first since the Leyte campaign in the Philippines in October 1944.

It was true, and began the week before. On 26 March 1945, at 1102 the signal "Ten Ichi-Go activated" was received on board Yamato, the flagship of the 2nd Fleet (Dai-Ni Kantai), anchored with other principal Japanese units at Hashirajima. Ten Ichi was the operational name for the defense of Okinawa, which envisioned a no holds barred commitment from all the Empire's armed forces. Important to this plan were tokko-"special attacks"— kamikazes.

Contrasting with the power of the mighty Yamato was the small role she and her escorts could play, the crippling fuel shortages rendering many ships useless. The plan tasked the 2nd Fleet with a diversionary sortie out of the Bungo Strait and round the coast of Kyushu to Sasebo in an attempt to "lure" American carriers within range of massed land-based



Army's fight.

kamikazes assembled at the Kyushu air bases. Of course such a sortie risked the fleet being attacked and sunk en route, but presumably the enemy carriers would suffer greatly from kamikaze attacks while doing so. Opinions among Japanese officers pointed to the implausibility of success for what VADM Ugaki Matome (Ed. Note: The text presents Japanese names with the surname first) of the 5th Air Fleet called the "favorite trick" of trying to lure the enemy to attack.

The invasion of Okinawa eliminated the need to draw the U.S. fleet into action. After getting underway a number of times, only to have the sorties canceled, a fateful order arrived on the afternoon of 5 April. Yamato would advance on the beachheads to destroy the enemy fleet in a do-or-die surface battle, and then beach itself on Okinawa as a land battery as her crew swam ashore to join the Japanese



Yamato, pictured underway during sea trials on 30 Oct '41, displaced over 70,000 tons and boasted powerful 18-in. guns, the largest ever placed on board a warship.

There would not even be air cover, and odds of reaching Okinawa undetected and unmolested were low. The hope was that it would divert some of the enemy carrier power from deflecting the massed kamikaze raids that would be in progress. When it departed the Inland Sea, the First Special Attack Force as finally comprised was under the commander of 2nd Fleet VADM Ito Seiichi, with Yamato as his flagship, light cruiser Yahagi, with eight destroyers: Asashimo, Fuyuzuki, Suzutsuki, Isokaze, Hamakaze, Yukikaze, Kasumi and Hatsushimo.

Preparing the Trap

As the force emerged into the Pacific, U.S. submarines quickly spotted it. USS Hackleback (SS 295) and Threadfin (SS 410) both flashed warnings and sighting reports after dusk on 6 April. Those submarines were there because American code breaking was already aware of the mission and general route, but these contact reports were the first needed confirmation and specific sighting.

Before VADM Marc Mitscher's TF 58 could launch an attack, the Japanese task force had to be located from the air to determine its position and course. If intelligence was wrong or outdated and the fleet was heading for Sasebo after all, it would probably escape. To find it, from his flagship USS Bunker Hill (CV 17) Mitscher ordered the veteran USS Essex (CV 9) in his own Task Group (TG) 58.3 to launch a predawn search of 19 fighters. To insure any sighting report was promptly received, two flights of four Corsairs each also launched. They would fly at 20,000 feet and serve as communication relays at 100 and 200 miles distance. PBM Mariners flying out of Kerama Retto were also on the alert for the search.

At 0822 the awaited and needed report came. Yamato and seven or eight destroyers had been sighted at position 30-44'N, 129-10'E, course 300 degrees, speed 12 knots. This raised evebrows among Mitscher's staff. This was a course for Sasebo and the distance was very long. A launch now would be taking a big chance that coordinates were correct, but Mitscher had gambled on a long-range launch before in the famous "mission beyond darkness" of the Battle of the Philippine Sea, and again in less risky fashion at Cape Engano off Leyte. He now did so again.

In the meantime the Japanese fleet had moved out into the Pacific before dawn and assumed a ring formation, with light cruiser Yahagi in the lead, which stressed AA defense. When enemy aircraft were detected, the ring could expand to 1,500 to 2,000 meters with Yamato at the center. National Naval Aviation Museum

With daylight breaking, the air was presumed to currently offer the greater threat. Trouble with the port reduction gear caused Asashimo to fall behind, necessitating a tightening of the formation.

At this time Mitscher was busy with strike planning and spotting. He ordered all three of his task groups to complete final preparations and launch their available deck strikes as soon as ready. He directed Essex to launch a "tracking force" of 16 fighters to pick up the contact and try to vector in the strike waves. As preparations began, an encouraging update arrived at 0825. The enemy fleet had changed course to 240 degrees true. That likely meant it was heading to Okinawa. The strikes should definitely proceed. Interestingly, there had been some debate about American battleships, operating as a bombardment and covering force for the Okinawa landing, engaging Yamato in a surface action. VADM Mitscher reported his readiness and asked VADM Raymond Spruance if he should "take them" or would the battleships? The characteristically terse and dry response came from the Fifth Fleet commander: "You Take Them.'



SB2C Helldivers joined torpedo-laden TBMs in delivering the aerial assault against the First Special Attack Force in the South China Sea.



TG 58.1 USS Bennington (CV 20)

CVG-82: nine VT (TBM), nine VB (SB2C) and seven VF (F6F and F4U)

> USS Hornet (CV 12) CVG-17: 13 VT (TBM), 14 VB (SB2C) and 16 VF (F6F)

USS Belleau Wood (CVL 24) AG 30: six VT (TBM) and eight VF (F6F)

USS San Jacinto (CVL 30) AG 45: eight VT (TBM) and seven VF (F6F)

USS Cabot (CVL 28) AG 29: nine VT (TBM) and 10 VF (F6F)

First Wave

Between 1015 and 1025 the four carriers of TG 58.1 commenced launching. Among the few pilots forced to abort was the intended strike leader, CAG-82 CDR George L. Heap. Command and control reverted to the next senior in command, CAG-17 LCDR E.G. Konrad. USS Hornet's (CV 12) CAG immediately took charge of the group and after rendezvous with the aircraft of TG 58.3, departed north toward the enemy.

TG 58.4's carriers had not reached launching position until late that morning, but began sending their aircraft into the air to join the attack at TG 58.3 was slightly faster getting its birds off the deck, launching 1045. Since the task group still had ground support obligations, this strike between 1000 and 1015, but the distance between the two task groups was smaller, with one less light carrier participating. The original plans made up the time difference so all aircraft could assemble together called for TG 58.4 to conduct combat patrols over Okinawa, and it had steamed hard northward through the night to rendezvous with Mitscher overhead before departure. After completing rendezvous, the two strike groups departed by dawn. It launched at the greatest range of the three task groups. For this north in two parallel masses of aircraft, TG 58.1's on the left or west reason air operations officers on board USS Yorktown (CV 10) flank, and TG 58.3's on the right or east side. Serving as Task Force and Intrepid (CV 11) opted to delay launching until they

Air Coordinator (including ostensibly TG 58.4 aircraft delayed in launching) over all three strike groups was CAG-83 CDR Harmon T. Utter of Essex.

There was a fourth air group of TG 58.3 lagging several minutes behind, CVG-6 not launching from USS Hancock (CV 19) until 1028. Utter's formation had not waited for them. Undaunted, CAG-6 CDR Henry L. Miller, who in 1942 trained the Doolittle Raiders to launch from a carrier, simply set off north on course 348 degrees after the rest. TG 58.1 and 58.3 had launched on the basis of an unconfirmed position. an act of some risk given the long range. As off Cape Engano, Mitscher had sent them aloft after an initial contact report prior to final certainty on the enemy's position, confident he would learn it. It remained for the search flights to justify his trust. At almost the same moment strikes

launched, the searchers had done just that.

At 0957 two PBMs of VPB-21 flying from Kerama Retto spotted the Japanese fleet. They were covering an anti-shipping track when they stumbled onto the proverbial jackpot.

Japanese lookouts spotted the seaplanes, and on board Yamato crewmen loaded the main batteries with San-shiki-dan, dubbed "beehive" shells, which exploded like a shotgun blast dispensing a vast amount of smaller fragments. A thrill coursed through the fleet, as the ship's "C" turret revolved slowly around and trained the great barrels. At 1016, with an awesome display of noise, its 18-in. guns bellowed at the taunting planes. The shells whined off into the distant sky and bloomed with loud rumbles like thunder.

Hastily opening the distance in response to the fire from below, the patrol planes sent out a contact report. That done, the airplane flown by LT Richard L. Simms again closed the formation's port flank long enough to snap a misty but remarkable photograph through the windows before ducking away again. For the next five hours, Simms and the other PBM flown by LT James E. Young shadowed the Yamato fleet, guiding Mitscher's aircraft

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USS Essex (CV 9) CVG 83: 15 VT (TBM), 12 VB (SB2C), 13 VF (5 F4U and 8 F6F) and four F6Fs comprising the Task Force Air Coodinator's plane, his wingman and two photo planes

USS Bunker Hill (CV 17) CVG 84: 14 VT (TBM), 10 VB (SB2C), 15 VF (F4U) and two F6F photo planes

USS Bataan (CVL 29) AG 47: eight VT (TBM) and 12 VF (F6F)

USS Hancock (CV 19) CVG-6: 14 VT (TBM), four VB (SB2C) and 20 VF (F4U and F6F)

TASK GROUPS

TG 58.3

TG 58.4 USS Intrepid (CV 11) CVG-10: 12 VT (TBM). 14 VB (SB2C), 16 VF (F4U)

USS Yorktown (CV 10) CVG 9: 14 VT (TBM), 13 VB (SB2C), 12 VF (F6F, including two photo planes)

> USS Langley (CVL 27) AG-23: seven VT (TBM), and 12 VF (F6F)

The first strike waves confronted poor weather as they flew steadily northward with intermittent rain squalls and constant low hanging clouds with a ceiling sometimes as low as 2,000 feet. It made for very dangerous and uncertain flying conditions for a mass of aircraft in close formation. but the air armada continued on its way; there was no other choice.

received confirmation of the original sighting and a firmer Naval History and Heritage Comman





The fatal blows struck by carrier aircraft in their attack against Yamato came in the form of Mark XIII torpedoes like that pictured here during loading into the bomb bay of a TBM Avenger on board USS Bennington (CV 20), 1945.

position report for the Japanese. Additionally, there was less urgency. TG 58.4's assignment was to attack any surviving escort ships, as it was presumed Yamato would have been sunk by then. For this reason, all the torpedoes of the *Avengers* were set for a 10-ft. depth, presumably ineffectual against a battleship's armor. As it transpired, the endurance of Yamato and Yahagi confounded the assumptions of the first two strike waves and greatly complicated this plan.

Strike leader for TG 58.4's wave was LCDR William E. Rawie of VBF-10, flying one of the powerful and fast Corsairs. Rawie was a veteran aviator, having flown F4F Wildcats off USS Enterprise (CV 6) at the Battle of Midway. He knew how disorienting a search at sea could be. Because of the time interval since the first two task groups' launch and the worsening weather, Rawie took his strike on a due north heading to make full use of visible landmarks provided by the small islands on that route, then once at the Japanese fleet's presumed latitude, turned west.

By noon the massed air armada in two parallel columns approached the last reported position of the Yamato fleet. The sea below remained empty, but just then planes reported a contact on their radars bearing to the northeast. Course was adjusted to head for it. Both formations veered westward and approached the contact at 6,000 feet through broken cloud cover. There were now multiple contacts and the strike leaders began to reduce altitude.

Moments later, at a range of four miles and altitude of only 2,500 feet, the great mass of Yamato and part of her fleet broke into view. Because of the cloud cover, only parts of the fleet were visible at a time. CDR Utter's strike group advanced and assessed the situation, and directed the squadrons to make a counter-clockwise circle. The great air-sea battle now began

Ito ordered the fleet to turn easterly toward the approaching aircraft's bearing. Ships rang up maximum battle speed and readied AA defenses. The destroyers stayed tight around the flagship and maintained good spacing as they turned, but the relative positions changed. When Yamato settled on a southeasterly course, Fuyuzuki was on her port bow and Suzutsuki on the starboard. Kasumi and Hamakaze ended up to port and apparently Hatsusushimo steamed in the battleship's wake. The turn allowed Asashimo to cut distance from the north, and she now was almost in sight of the fleet. Yahagi was now left astern by the turn and was the most westerly of the ships when the attack began.

CDR Utter watched this as he flew high overhead and began assigning targets. With TG 58.1's planes on the west and left flank, nearer to the Japanese, Utter directed LCDR Konrad to take his group in first. The fighters would go after the cruiser and screen, and with their torpedoes set to 10-ft. depth, so would Bennington's torpedo planes. Bennington's and Hornet's dive bombers, along with all of CVG-17's Avengers, were assigned "the big boy." Utter gave the attack signal at 1237.

VB-82 and VB-17 went in quickly while VT-17 deployed to attack from the east. Leading VT-17, LCDR W.M. Romberger directed the change in depth settings of torpedoes from 10 to 20 feet to attack Yamato. This was a difficult procedure requiring the radioman or gunner to climb down into the TBM's tunnel to adjust the weapon. Only eight of the fish received the deeper setting. Romberger led these eight against Yamato, while the other five attacked the screening ships.

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Multiple carrier aircraft swarm overhead IJNS Yahagi, 7 Apr '45. While Yamato was the prize, her escorts were also the subject of intense attacks.





Yamato's radar tracked the approaching aircraft. The ship conformed her torpedo evasions as much as possible to the direction of the wind by heading into it in the belief that wind pushing on the broad quarter would help accelerate a turning movement. During the action that followed Yamato was observed to make S-turn evasions that were generally southwesterly or starboard turns.

As VT-17 bore in on Yamato from the east, she turned hard starboard to a southerly course, then began evasive action. At the same time, dive bombers from *Bennington* plunged from the north and astern while others from *Hornet* swept over from starboard to port. The groups intersected so closely that VB-82's flight lead said *Hornet's* planes cut at right angles in front of the last SB2C Helldiver in his group.

The first damage to Yamato came at 1241 from two 500-lb. generalpurpose bombs from Bennington SB2Cs, which hit and destroyed the



The Hook, Fall 2020

important radar room shack at the mainmast, killing all within. Barely a minute or so later, two 1,000-lb. bombs from Hornet Helldivers struck iust a bit aft of this, blasting a 6-in, turret and leaving it a gutted ruin and starting a stubborn fire in a storeroom above the armored deck. Though these bomb hits caused considerable havoc among personnel, they did not endanger the ship in any way.

Meanwhile Hornet's eight Avengers came gunning for Yamato's port side. Almost immediately one of them took a flak hit and went down. Another found itself out of position and broke off to attack the screen. The remaining six dropped their torpedoes. *Yamato* responded with a sharp high-speed series of S-turns, but managed to avoid the bulk of them.

The first torpedo hit on Yamato came at 1245 with an impact in the prow area at frame 10 that apparently blew a hole through the narrow hull, but caused no appreciable



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damage. Japanese reports conflict whether two more torpedoes struck home near this first one. Yamato's wreck shows port side damage at frames 10, 42 and 52, and the simple probability is that Yamato Executive Officer CAPT Nomura Jiro's assessment that there were three hits that did not cause considerable damage was correct. Furthermore, destroyers reported three torpedo hits on Yamato at this time, indicating Hornet's VT-17 scored between one and three.

While Yamato endured her first impacts in this battle, VT-82 attacked the screen. A torpedo hit in the starboard beam completely immobilized Yahagi at 1246 and another in the port quarter smashed her rudder and propellers. Moments later, a direct bomb hit from a VMF-112 Corsair off Bennington put the No. 1 turret out of action. Except for the stern damage, she appeared otherwise intact, and her AA battery remained operational.

At nearly the same time, disaster overtook the veteran destroyer Hamakaze. Steaming off Yamato's port beam, two bombs from VB-17 exploded in crew spaces and severed the fantail aft of No. 2 turret. Hamakaze veered out of control and spun out of formation, only to be hit squarely amidships by a torpedo from a Hornet TBM flown by LTJG Robert L. Mini, who opted to attack the destroyer instead of Yamato when he found himself out of postion. Hamakaze exploded, snapped in two between the stacks. The stern sank at once, and the bow half rolled over to port and stood up to the sky before plunging below at 1248.

As USS Belleau Wood (CVL 24) planes made brazen attacks on Yahagi and Yamato, the battleship's gunners shot down a VT-30 TBM flown by LTJG William E. Delaney. Delaney and his two crewmen bailed out before their Avenger hit the water, and Delaney ended up floating near the crippled Yahagi. In the hours that followed, Delaney would become for the Yamato strike, a survivor with a ringside seat to events.

Meanwhile, Asashimo had nearly rejoined the Yamato formation, and at that time was not far west of *Hamakaze*. Whether her port engine was partially operable is unknown, but she opened fire on the aircraft of TG 58.3 waiting their turn overhead. Believing Asashimo to be either a picket or cruiser, VB-84 from Bunker Hill pounced on her around 1245–1250. They stopped Asashimo dead in the water with three direct hits along the starboard rail amidships aft, which would have and apparently did put the one definite good engine out of action.

Moments later VF-82 Commanding Officer LCDR. E.W. Hessel attacked Asashimo, his bomb landing close alongside, but failing to explode. The end soon came. USS San Jacinto's (CVL 30) entire Air Group 45 had been assigned by Utter to attack the "picket," not knowing that VB-84 had already done so. San Jacinto's planes found Asashimo looking deceptively intact on even keel and trim, but moving slowly. Two torpedoes hit the starboard side, one amidships and one under the bridge. She broke up, upended and sank by 1310.

Part Two will appear in Winter 2020.



- Aircraft Servicing
- Quick Turns
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n the evening of 3 December 1950, in what turned out to be the final letter to his wife Daisy, ENS Jesse Brown spoke of the nature of the missions he was flying over Korea. "Knowing that he's helping the poor guys on the ground I think every pilot ... here would fly until he dropped in his tracks. This morning we were flying in weather so bad we could hardly see each other at times-snowing. Yet the air was full of planes." Though Brown was like "every pilot" in supporting the embattled Marines in the Chosin Reservoir in that pivotal campaign of the Korean War, he was the Navy's first African American combat aviator. The following day he and VF-32 squadronmate LTJG Thomas J. Hudner Jr. were part of one of the most storied acts of heroism and devotion in the annals of Naval Aviation history. It is part of the legacy of the modern VFA-32 Swordsmen, whose 75 years of operations include combat over Tokyo in World War II and defying Muammar al-Qaddafi's "Line of Death" in the Gulf of Sidra.

It is fitting that today's Swordsmen are a VFA, equally comfortable in the air-to-air and air-to-ground arenas, for it was into such a multimission role that the squadron was born during World War II. On 2 January 1945, a need to bolster fleet defense against kamikazes while preserving the strike capabilities of carrier air groups prompted creation of a new category of squadron, VBF (Bombing Fighting Squadron). One of them was VBF-3, which established not in a formal stateside ceremony, but while deployed on board USS Yorktown (CV 10) with personnel drawn from the embarked VF-3 as well as the VF-11 Sundowners and VF-81 Freelancers. The first skipper, LCDR Fritz Wolf, came from the former and had received his Wings of Gold in October 1940 only to resign his commission 10 months later to join the American Volunteer Group. Flying shark-mouthed Curtiss Tomahawks with Claire Chennault's famed Flying Tigers, Wolf shot down four Japanese aircraft, his squadron leader reporting, "He has not hesitated to force



an engagement or press the encounter."

"Downing of Flogger" by Robert Fiacco depicts an element of the 4 Jan '89, engagement over the Gulf of Sidra during which VF-32 Swordsmen F-14 Tomcats splashed two Libyan MiG-23 Floggers.



VBF-3's wartime insignia featured a wolf, a nod to Commanding Officer LCDR Fritz Wolf, riding a bomb while wielding machine guns, which reflects the bombingfighting mission.



Tailhook collection



Assembled from the ranks of multiple squadrons, pilots of VBF-3 gather in front of the scoreboard painted on the island of USS Yorktown (CV 10), 1945.

National Archive



ENS Jesse Brown, the first African American to complete the Navy's flight training program and become a Naval Aviator, flies a VF-32 F8F-2 Bearcat, Nov '49.

That fighting spirit was needed as VBF-3's pilots faced an impending test. Departing Ulithi Atoll just nine days after its 1 February 1945 establishment, the squadron conducted combat training flights at sea. A war history noted that "it appeared the prodigious infant had come of age: the squadron was ready for the enemy." They hoped to encounter that enemy in the air, for they secretly resented the "B" in their new squadron designation for it denoted "explosive-lugging and bomb-dumping," anathema to fighter pilots.

The Japanese waiting in the skies over Tokyo obliged them as the fast carriers of Task Force 58 launched their first strikes against the home islands. VBF-3 overcame awful weather to claim 36 kills in two days. Though one enemy pilot tried to ram the F6F Hellcat flown by LT C.A. Williams, the squadron suffered no combat losses. Retiring from Japanese waters, Task Force 58 set course toward Iwo Jima, where the bombing mission proved most satisfying supporting embattled Marines on the island.

VBF-3's combat days ended almost as quickly as they began with the final missions flown on 25 February 1945, over Hachijo Jima, where concentrated anti-aircraft fire hit three squadron airplanes. Returning to the states, the squadron reformed in May under LCDR E.S. Gwathmey at NAAS Oceana. News of V-J Day created pandemonium in the ranks. Flying was suspended for 48 hours so personnel could celebrate.

The squadron remained operational following the war, participating in bond drives and a demonstration at the National Air Races in 1946. On 15 November of that year it received the new designation VF-4A as result of the discontinuation of the VBF designation. The "A" indicated assignment to an attack carrier, and in the case of VF-4A it was USS Kearsarge (CV 33). Flying a new feline in the form of the F8F Bearcat, the squadron deployed as part of Carrier Air Group Three (CVG 3) for the ship's maiden cruise training midshipmen in the Caribbean and North Atlantic in 1947 followed by a Mediterranean deployment the following year. During their time at sea the pilots of VF-4A, commanded by LCDR Robert W. "Duke" Windsor, conducted flight operations as the U.S. monitored the events surrounding the first Arab-Israeli War. While at sea the squadron redesignated again, becoming VF-32 on 7 August 1948, and the following year it exchanged its sporty Bearcats for F4U-4 Corsairs. The change in designation also brought a new insignia, its centerpiece a Windsor Lion beneath Wings of Gold and scroll bearing the motto "Deau et Patria" meaning "God and Country."

In May 1950 VF-32 took its new "Bent-Winged Birds" to sea on board USS Levte (CV 32), which departed for the Mediterranean to join U.S. Sixth Fleet. During the ensuing months the squadron supported war games, including the landing of Marines at Malta and operations with Allied navies. Port calls included Athens, Greece and the French Riviera, where some Leyte crewmen met the honeymooning Hollywood starlet Elizabeth Taylor. While operating off Beirut, Lebanon, which included an air-power demonstration with aircraft from USS Midway (CVB 41). those on board *Levte* received word that the ship and embarked air group were to return to Norfolk to make preparations before heading to the Pacific. The war games of the previous months were about to become very real in the skies over Korea.

VF-32 logged its first combat mission on 10 October 1950, and skipper LCDR Dugald T. Neill had an interesting experience a short time later. Engine trouble prompted him to make a forced landing at Wonsan, which had been captured by Republic of Korea (ROK) forces just hours earlier. Neill landed during a ceremony presided over by two Army generals,

Walton Walker and Earl Partridge. This was not appreciated by the flag officers. However, an ROK general, in honor of the fact that Neill represented the first Naval Aviator to land at Wonsan, presented him with two North Korean battle flags that he took back to Leyte as the squadron's first trophies of war.

During 92 days on the line, CVG-3 experienced the full range of operations with a VF-31 F9F-2 Panther scoring a MiG kill, strikes against bridges along the Yalu River bordering China and interdiction missions. Perhaps most fulfilling was providing close air support for embattled Marine and Army units battling masses of Chinese forces amid the frozen landscape of the Chosin Reservoir.

On 30 November 1950, Leyte aircraft commenced what the ship's after action report termed a "maximum effort close support mission in the Chosin Reservoir area." The first day included 90 combat sorties, followed by 229 over the ensuing four days. These missions included the dropping of napalm on two parallel ridges approximately 1 1/4 miles long "cremating Chinese communist troops holding these highly strategic high positions along the only usable route to Hamhung." Over the course of December, aircraft launched from Leyte attacked more than 152 troop emplacements, inflicting what intelligence officers estimated as between 8,000 and 10,000 casualties.

On 4 December 1950, Brown and Hudner were part of a four-plane flight flying at low altitude over the Chosin Reservoir. The other aviators were LCDR Dick Cevoli and Brown's roommate, LT William Koenig.

Suddenly, Brown radioed to his squadronmates that his engine was running rough and he was rapidly losing airspeed. His altitude too low to bail out; he identified a clearing and made a forced landing. The F4U-4 hit with such force that it crumpled the plane, the engine separating from the fuselage. Flying overhead, the other VF-32 pilots observed Brown wave, but saw no effort to climb out of the cockpit as smoke emanated from his airplane.

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Flying F4U-4 Corsairs, VF-32 logged its only combat missions of the Korean War operating from USS Leyte (CV 32), pictured here at anchor in Sasebo, Japan, Nov '50.

Hudner, informed by Cevoli that a helicopter had been summoned, knew the length of time it would take for it to reach the crash site. He made the decision to purposely crash land his own aircraft near that of Brown. Though shaken by the impact, Hudner quickly climbed out of the airplane and made his way to that of his squadronmate, about 100 yards away. He recalled approaching and hearing Brown saying something to the effect of, "We have got to figure out a way out of here."

The combination of ice forming on the wreck and its gull-wing design, made it difficult for Hudner to get good footing. However, he was able to pull himself up to a position where he could observe that Brown's knee was pinned beneath part of the instrument panel. He also saw that his squadronmate's hands were frozen. Brown had taken off his helmet and his gloves in an effort to unbuckle the straps of his parachute harness. Unfortunately he had dropped his gloves and could not reach them. Hudner placed a Navy watch cap on Brown's head and wrapped his scarf around his hands.

According to his Medal of Honor citation, Hudner "packed the fuselage with snow to keep the flames away from the pilot and struggled to pull him free. He then remained on the spot despite the continuing danger from enemy action and, with the assistance of the rescue pilot, Marine First Lieutenant Charles Ward, renewed a desperate but unavailing battle against time, cold and flames." With darkness approaching, Hudner and Ward, departed the area leaving Brown, who passed in and out of consciousness during the entire rescue process, and ultimately succumbed to the freezing temperatures. He was VF-32's only fatality during this lone combat cruise to Korea.

Returning to the familiar environs of the Atlantic Fleet, the squadron transitioned to jets, becoming the first fleet squadron to operate Grumman's sweptwing F9F-6 Cougar (VF-32 later operated -8 versions). Photographs from a world cruise on board USS Tarawa (CVA 40) show a white lightning bolt outlined in red adorning the nose of VF-32's jets, which inspired the unofficial squadron nickname White Lightnin'. One pilot recalled the origin as reflecting the abilities of the potent moonshine to both fill up the pilots at the bar and help power their jet (aircraft. There was even a corresponding patch with a rifletoting hillbilly riding a moonshine bottle trailing exhaust.



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LTJG Thomas J. Hudner Jr. receiving the Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman during a White House ceremony on 13 Apr '51, for his heroic rescue attempt of squadronmate ENS Jesse Brown.

Doug Olson collectio

Following a Mediterranean cruise on board USS Ticonderoga (CVA 14) in 1955-'56, VF-32 prepared to set the pace for the fleet once again when it was chosen as the first operational squadron to transition to the F8U-1 Crusader. On a record-setting flight by former squadron skipper CDR Duke Windsor on 21 August 1956, the Crusader had become the first operationally-equipped aircraft to exceed 1,000 mph. The first of the speedy fighters began arriving at the squadron's home at NAS Cecil Field, Fla., in March 1957 and later that year VF-32 took them to sea for carrier qualifications and deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for gunnery, field carrier landing practice, tactics and instrument training. They logged 745.4 flight hours in 23 days of operations.

VF-32 went aboard USS Saratoga (CVA 60) in 1958, a deployment that included flying missions during the Lebanon Crisis. On this cruise, squadron skipper CDR Gordon "Buck" Buhrer initiated a contest to pick a new nickname. The white lightning did not stand out against the light gull gray over white paint scheme on their new mounts. With Chance-Vought having chosen a knight crusader as the logo for the airplane, and their squadron the first to operate it, the pilots settled on the The Supersonic Swordsmen, which later was shortened to the Swordsmen by which the squadron is known to this day. They were actually the second squadron to adopt the nickname after VA-145 in 1954.

During subsequent cruises on board Sara, a number of aviators passed through the VF-32 ready room, including LTJGs Robert Shumaker and John Holtzclaw. Shumaker was destined to be the second Naval Aviator taken prisoner by the North Vietnamese when he was shot down in 1965. Holtzclaw was pulled from the jungle along with his radar intercept officer (RIO) in a daring June 1968 rescue for which helicopter pilot LTJG Clyde Lassen received the Medal of Honor. The squadron's operations included carrier suitability trials on board the French carrier Clemenceau (R98) demonstrating the Crusader's capabilities to the French Navy. VF-32 also stood alert at NAS Key West and flew in support of photoreconnaissance missions during the uncertain days of the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.

In July 1965, the Swordsmen began another period of transition that brought a move to NAS Oceana, Va., detachment from CVW-3 after more than two decades and a new aircraft, the F-4B Phantom II. The two-seat jet expanded the squadron's ranks with the assignment of RIOs, who along with the pilots soon found themselves operating from USS Franklin D. Roosevelt (CVA 42) off North Vietnam. The squadron completed 940 combat sorties in support of *Operation Rolling Thunder* during 1966–'67 without losing a single airplane to enemy action. As was the case in Korea, VF-32's participation in this war on the Asian mainland involved a single deployment, the squadron returning with FDR to the Atlantic Fleet.

In 1969 the Swordsmen made the maiden deployment of USS John F. Kennedy (CVA 67), the beginning of a long association with Big John. This included receiving the Meritorious Unit Citation in 1970 for operations in response to fighting between Jordanian and Palestinian forces during which Syria intervened.

Returning from a deployment in December 1973, the Swordsmen headed west to NAS Miramar as the first East Coast squadron to transition to the F-14A, with squadron skipper CDR Jerry Knutson and RIO LTJG David Leestma recording the first *Tomcat* trap on board *JFK* on 14 November 1974. Operating in the Atlantic, the Swordsmen had many opportunities to intercept Soviet Tu-95 Bear and Tu-16 Badger bombers during the Cold War at sea. In 1976 VF-32 aircrew honed their air-toair skills against French F-8 Crusaders during exercises. The squadron's demonstration of that airplane nearly two decades earlier prompted the French Navy to procure it.

Shifting to CVW-6 on board USS Independence (CV 62), VF-32 experienced separate combat actions thousands of miles apart during a 1983-'84 deployment. Aircrew employed the Tomcat's new Tactical Air Reconnaissance Pod System (TARPS) during Operation Urgent *Fury*, providing mapping of the island of Grenada and imagery of gun emplacements, troop concentrations and post-strike bomb damage during 36 armed reconnaissance sorties. The Swordsmen also logged TARPS missions over Syrian positions in Lebanon.

On 4 January 1989, having returned to the familiar spaces of John F. Kennedy, VF-32 Tomcats scored the squadron's first kills since battling the enemy over Japan in 1945. Tracking two incoming MiG-23 Floggers heading over the Gulf of Sidra after taking off from a Libyan airfield, the F-14 crews varied their course and altitude to open space between National Naval Aviation Museum



A VF-32 Crusader recovers on board USS Saratoga (CVA 60), the floating home for the Swordsmen during every squadron deployment in the F-8.



VF-32's lone Vietnam combat cruise came flying F-4Bs off USS Franklin D. Roosevelt (CVA 42). Here the squadron CAG bird lands at NAF Atsugi with symbols for 11 bombing missions on the jet's intake splitter, Oct '66.



Nicknamed "Tina Marie," a VF-32 F-4B taxies onto the catapult on board USS John F. Kennedy (CVA 67) during one of the Swordsmen's many Mediterranean cruises on board Big John



VF-32's sword adorned the twin tails of the F-14 Tomcat beginning in 1974, the "Big Fighter" flown by the squadron during its Libyan MiG kills and multiple combat missions in Middle East.

through the Suez Canal following Operation Desert Storm, 12 Mar '91.



the incoming aircraft, gauge their intent and gain a favorable position. The Libyan aircraft correspondingly adjusted their course and increased speed to head straight toward the Navy fighters.

Just over four minutes after making initial contact with the Libyan airplanes, the first AIM-7 Sparrow missile roared off the Tomcat flown by pilot LT Herman C. Cook III and RIO LCDR Steven P. Collins at a distance of 12 nautical miles. It missed, but within seconds the pair fired another one at a distance of some 10 nautical miles, this one tracking and hitting one of the Libyan airplanes. In the other F-14, VF-32 Commanding Officer CDR Joseph B. Connelly and RIO CDR Leo F. Enwright Jr. engaged the second MiG-23 at closer range. The enemy aircraft was visible in the pilot's head-up display as they launched an AIM-9 Sidewinder that splashed the hostile fighter. Observing two the twilight years of the venerable aircraft. chutes, the F-14 crews departed the area and returned to John F. Kennedy. During Operation Desert Fox in December 1998, the Commenting on the air battle, Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Ga., chairman of the squadron expended over 111,000 pounds of precision-guided munitions while participating in 16 strike missions and 38 sorties. Armed Services Committee, stated, "You cannot, in this day and time



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and modern technology, wait until another plane has fired in order to defend yourself. It's too late then." In the face of "hostile intent," the Swordsmen were not too late.

In August 1990 the squadron was on detachment at Nellis AFB when Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait. The aircrew flying over the Nevada desert never imagined that within weeks they would be on station in the Red Sea participating in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. VF-32 logged 1.445 combat flight hours on 403 missions over Iraq during the latter, including 38 TARPS missions. Thus began a regular cycle of deployments as the *Gypsies* (tactical callsign) roamed to hot spots around the region from Iraq to Bosnia-Herzegovina, taking TARPS into the digital age and employing the bombing capability of the *Tomcat* in



VF-32 recorded notable combat accomplishments, becoming the first *Tomcat* squadron to drop a GBU-24 laser-guided bomb, recording the first multiple GBU-24 drop by any platform and achieving the first combat use of the Low-Altitude Navigational and Targeting-Infrared for Night targeting pod. VF-32's ready room during *Desert Fox* also included some of the first females in Naval Aviation history to fly in combat.

After being part of the maiden deployment of USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) in 2000–'01, VF-32 flew from the ship during *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, dropping more than 202 tons of ordnance on successive deployments during 2003–'05 before finally relinquishing their F-14s for F/A-18F *Super Hornets*. Returning to *Truman* and launching from her deck for the first time with VFA-32 painted on the fuselages of their jets, the *Swordsmen* have continued to add to the annals of the squadron's distinguished history. This has been the case in combat missions supporting *Operations Enduring Freedom*, *New Dawn* and *Inherent Resolve* and in the recent record-setting deployment on board USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN 69), which because of the pandemic spent 206 consecutive days at sea.

On 4 April 2018, CAPT Thomas J. Hudner Jr., who before his death at the age of 93 was the last living Naval Aviator Medal of Honor recipient, was laid to rest with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery. As taps sounded, nearly seven decades removed from that snowy hillside in Korea, a low rumble grew louder as VFA-32 F/A-18Fs roared overhead, one breaking formation to climb into the heavens in a final salute to one of Naval Aviation's greatest heroes and part of the 75-year legacy of the *Swordsmen*.

USN, MC3 Ricardo Reyes



A pair of VFA-32 Swordsmen F/A-18F Super Hornets pictured against the backdrop of the Persian Gulf while returning to Truman, 2 Apr '08.





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IN MARSHAL

Command Changes



CARRIER STRIKE GROUP ONE RDML Timothy J. Kott relieved RDML Alvin Holsey 25 June 2020 NavSta San Diego

NAVAL INFORMATION

WARFARE SYSTEMS

COMMAND

RADM Douglas Small

relieved

RADM Christian Becker

21 August 2020

San Diego





CVW-1 CAPT Matthew Barr relieved CAPT Robert Gentry 24 July 2020 NAS Oceana

CVW-7

CAPT Nathan Ballou

relieved

CAPT William Reed

23 July 2020

NAS Óceana

CVW-17

CAPT Todd Cimicata

relieved

CAPT Robert Loughran

29 May 2020

USS Nimitz







J.S. Fleet Activities Sasebo VAQ-133 CDR Kyle Aduskevich relieved CDR David Halpern

18 September 2020

NAS Whidbey Island

(LPD 18)

relieved

VAO-141 CDR Josh Ales relieved CDR Bryan Haney



VAW-117 CDR Michael Stephen relieved CDR Ryan Carstens 24 September 2020 NBVC Point Mugu

VFA-11 CDR John McGee relieved CDR Eric McQueen 2 July 2020 NAS Oceana

VFA-31 CDR Matthew K. Lewis relieved CDR Damon B. Loveless 10 July 2020 NAS Óceana

VFA-32 CDR Michael K. Witt relieved CDR Thomas H. Bunker 27 August 2020 NAS Oceana

VFA-81 CDR Mark E. Kennedv relieved CDR Dallas R. Jamison 28 August 2020 NAS Oceana

VFA-94 CDR Chris Nicoletti relieved CDR Matthew Morgan 6 September 2020 USS Nimitz

VFA-103 CDR Brian Broadwater relieved CDR Patrice Fernandes 26 June 2020 NAS Oceana

VFA-131 CDR Samuel P. Morrison relieved CDR Aras M. Knasas 6 August 2020 NAS Oceana



VFA-136 CDR Timothy Hurley relieved CDR Justin Halligan 10 September 2020 NAS Lemoore



VFC-111 CDR Derek Ashlock relieved CDR Matthew Meritt 13 November 2020 NAS Key West



ATTENTION SOUADRON 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.

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21 August 2020 MCAS Iwakuni

VRM-30 CDR Steve Parente relieved CDR Trevor Hermann 8 October 2020 NAS North Island

VT-7 CDR Dylan G. Porter relieved CDR Michael R. Poe 25 September 2020 NAS Meridian





VT-21 CDR Chris Glandon relieved CDR Matthew Maher 14 August 2020 NAS Kingsville

VT-31 CDR Quinn Rhodes relieved CDR Michael R. Neilson 3 September 2020 NAS Corpus Christi

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USN, MC3 Andrew Taylor







USS Harry S. Truman

CVW-1 TEAM TARBOX

by LT Jeannette "NASCAR" Lazzaro, USN VW-1 returned home from deployment in June and enjoyed some welcome rest and relaxation (albeit COVID-restricted) before jumping back into work ups in preparation for another deployment on board USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75). During the interim period, CVW-1 completed a Change of Command with CAPT Matthew "Hondo" Barr relieving CAPT Robert "Fitz" Gentry as CAG-1 in an airborne ceremony at NAS Oceana on 24 July. Fitz led *Team Tarbox* since March 2019, during which time CVW-1 completed a condensed work-up cycle and a dynamic seven-month deployment on board HST and a nine-month deployment for four maritime strike helicopter elements.

As CAG-1 CAPT Barr leads the air wing into the beginning of its third work-up cycle in as many years preparing to take *Team Tarbox* into the next deployment. Under CAG's leadership and guidance, we will continue our proud history dating to establishment as *Ranger* Air Group in 1938 serving on board USS Ranger (CV 4), the first U.S. ship built from the keel up as an aircraft carrier. USN, MC2 Joshua M. Tolbert

CAPT Matthew Barr relieves CAPT Robert Gentry as Commander, CVW-1 during an aerial change-of-command ceremony at NAS Oceana on 24 Jul '20.

During this quarter the CVW-1 staff also said farewell to LCDRs Jay "McFly" McVann, Garth "Ham Sandwich" Willard and Calvin "Da' Gum" Stark; LTs Joseph "The Boz" McAuliffe and Frank "Siri" Bonner. The staff hailed LCDR Bradley "Farva" Stinehart and LTs Jeannette "NASCAR" Lazzaro, Warlin "Key" Marte, Andy "PYG" Jaloli and Kevin "Gooch" Groach.

VAW-126 SEAHAWKS

by LT Patrick Hayes, USN

The VAW-126 Seahawks have just returned from a seven-month deployment on board Truman, which included extensive time in the North Arabian Sea. The Seahawks left U.S. Fifth Fleet in April, arriving home in early June to spend some welcome time with family and friends. On 10 July the squadron hosted a change-of-command ceremony,

bidding farewell to CDR John Coleman and welcoming new Commanding Officer CDR Marc Foreman and new Executive Officer CDR Chuck Cline.

There are exciting times ahead for VAW-126. On 28 July the Seahawks received our first aerial refueling (AR) capable Hawkeye. In the coming months we will replace our entire fleet with AR capable aircraft and qualify the fleet's first aircrew in this new capability for the E-2 community. The squadron's first aerial plugs took place in late August. The ability to extend our range without interrupting the mission will be a game changer for the fleet.





USS CARL VINSON READY TO SUPPORT CVW-2 by LTJG Drake Greer, USN

fter a 17-month Docking Phased Incremental Availability (DPIA) and move to a new home port in San Diego to begin work ups, USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70), along with CVW-2, is prepared to lead the charge introducing and integrating the next generation of aircraft and capabilities into the fleet. With major maintenance and upgrades now complete, CVN 70 has the speed, agility and maneuverability to deploy the world's most advanced air wing over 5,000 nautical miles in less than a week and arrive ready to fight.

"I'm proud of all the hard work and dedication shown by the entire crew throughout the DPIA, and particularly with the added challenges we faced during the pandemic," said Commanding Officer CAPT Matthew "Pappy" Paradise.

Since March extensive COVID-19 mitigation measures, including multiple daily cleaning and disinfecting efforts, no touch temperature checks, split shifts and restriction of movement for all personnel prior to embarking the ship, enabled the full weight of the Vinson workforce to apply continuous effort through the maintenance period.

CVN 70 received multiple upgrades preparing her to support the next wave of innovative aircraft, including a complete restoration and system retrofit to accommodate the F-35C Lightning II mission capabilities. This includes improvements to combat and electrical systems, crew living spaces (especially staterooms) and maintenance on the ship's hull, rudders and shafts.

In the air department, aircraft launch and recovery equipment officer LTJG Jorge Pavon and his Sailors have been hard at work preparing to operate the highly advanced, fifth-generation aircraft. One of the most significant upgrades is the system modification to the crossdeck pendant. Originally the engines for the arresting gear required melted zinc to

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operate. "The zinc is poured on the terminal to harden as it cools, keeping the purchase cable attached. The whole process took six to eight hours to heat up the zinc, prep the cable and pour the zinc," explained Pavon. "This was only good for a set number of recoveries before the engine (for the arresting cable) had to be shut down and more zinc had to be poured."

With Vinson now the third ship with two new metal shaping (swedge) machines, that maintenance time has been drastically slashed to only 45 minutes by compressing the terminal onto the purchase cable instead of using zinc. The result is more time spent conducting flight operations.

Several of the carrier's aircraft maintenance spaces have been extensively remodeled to accommodate the advanced avionics and parts for the F-35C. According to LT Juan P. Garcia, aircraft intermediate maintenance department avionics and armament division officer, "There is a new battery shop that has been drastically redesigned, the seat shop is roomier and the jet bay has received bigger hoists. Everything has gotten bigger to accommodate the heavier and larger parts for the F-35C."

New electronic consolidated automatic support systems (ECASS) will help save money, provide robust repair capability and give the air wing more endurance while deployed. "ECASS simulates all the electronics inside the aircraft that lets us know what we need to keep going at the enemy. We're not spending millions shipping the aircraft to somewhere in New Jersey, but smaller amounts getting the parts and repairing it piecemeal," according to Garcia.

Already up and running, the Autonomic Logistics Information System (ALIS) is part of the F-35C's network and software to identify and diagnose issues after every flight.

The revitalized Carl Vinson and CVW-2, the arsenal bolstered by the addition of the F-35C, CMV-22 Osprev, E-2D Advanced Hawkeye and upgraded EA-18G Growler, are ready to get back into the fight.

TEAM BROADSWORD BEGINS BASIC PHASE WITH ADVANCED CAPABILITIES by LCDR James Russo, USN

CVW-2 began the basic phase of its Optimized-Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) cycle with the completion of its first air-to-air missile shoot and unit level Advanced Readiness Program (ARP) events. Traditionally the platform-specific ARP focused on employing the specific type/model/ series as a unit. CVW-2 has leaped forward and pulled integration into the fixed-wing ARP syllabi, redefining basic phase. They will close out ARP with integrated air-to-air and air-to-surface events, fusing the advanced and increased capabilities of the fixed-wing platforms (FA-18E/F, EA-18G, F-35C and E-2D) to increase the available information, lethality and survivability across the entire air wing.

At the air wing's first air-to-air missile shoot, VFA-2, VFA-113, VFA-192, VAQ-136 and VFA-147 launched 15 air-to-air missiles during the Naval Weapons System Evaluation Program (NWSEP) 20.09. This readiness milestone provides critical end-to-end training and experience for maintainers and aircrew. Training provided spans from the uploading and troubleshooting of ordnance to its expenditure and flight profiles. It is a rare opportunity to practice with live air-to-air ordnance, one that aircrew and maintainers took full advantage of.

"As all of our squadrons work their way through their respective ARP, they will build foundational skills that will translate to more advanced phases of our OFRP where we begin to integrate with the entire carrier strike group (CSG)," said CAG-2 CAPT Matthew J. Thrasher. "We must learn to integrate within the air wing before we can effectively impact the entire CSG. There are individual and command level skills at play. As individuals, aircrew hone their warfighting skills and squadron maintainers gain proficiency at troubleshooting and fixing combat systems. At a unit level, the squadrons iron out how they fight as a unit, developing trust and confidence in their personnel and aircraft."

The composition of CVW-2 combines organic fifth-generation information and survivability with increased command and control and airborne electronic attack capacity. As ARP is part of the basic phase, CVW-2 is laving the foundational skills to unearth the technological, material and procedural changes that must be incorporated for *Team Broadsword* to realize the full potential of these advanced capabilities.

Team Broadsword is defining the future of the carrier air wing. With the most capable platforms and advanced weapons systems, CVW-2 is modernizing how Naval Aviation sustains, operates and trains to capitalize on these assets. Through multiplatform integration CVW-2 will provide fleet commanders the ability to achieve the advantage across multiple domains: air, land, sea and electromagnetic.

USN MC3 Josiah I Kunkle



HT2 Alan Olay and HTC John Rodriguez perform maintenance on a potable water pipe in the USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) machine shop, 17 Apr '20.

VFA-192 GOLDEN DRAGONS

by LT Aaron Fess, USN

It has been an exciting summer for the World-Famous Golden Dragons. Despite the pandemic turning abnormal into normal, the *Dragons* are persevering and off to a phenomenal start to the OFRP. New department head LCDR Richard "Lolo" LeFils and senior junior officer (JO) LT Catherine "BARB" Drake completed the Naval Weapons System Evaluation Program (NWSEP) at Tyndall AFB in sunny Florida by employing two AIM-120 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM) against airborne drones. Upon return, they were greeted by a host of new faces as the ready room increased from eight to 14 pilots to begin the work-up cycle. The Dragons added department head LCDR Gavin "Fa'afa" MacGarva from VX-31 and the following nugget pilots: LTs Josh Kinnane, Aaron Fess, Jake Bredemeyer, Eric Nelson and Caitie Perkowski. Bolstered by these new numbers, the Dragon ready room now features a proper JOPA [Junior Officer Protective Association], freeing BARB from her two-and-a-half-year stint as the "new guy."





The highlight of the summer was the Dragons' detachment (det) to NAS Fallon where they successfully put their new Lot 42 jets to the test during a revamped and dynamic air-to-air Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program (SFARP). All-star senior JOs LTs Jake "Pongo" Pieper and BARB, fresh off completing Level IV qualifications, successfully led a new cadre of JOs to an impressive showing in survivability and lethality.

Bravo Zulu to the Dragon maintenance department for its ability to launch all eight squadron aircraft to "defend the CSG" during a heavily contested defensive counter-air mission. The Dragons went back to the boat for the first time in two years for flight-deck certification and carrier qualification on board Carl Vinson before air-to-surface SFARP in October as the work-up cycle continues in preparation for deployment next summer.

The *Dragons* bid farewell to several workhorses who have been leaders in one of the most undermanned ready rooms in recent history. Fair winds to LCDR Troy "FUBU" Vantrease and LT Dylan "Mimsy" Nelson, who are heading to the VFA-125 Rough Raiders to become F-35 instructors in the fleet replacement squadron (FRS). Also, good luck to the outgoing training officer, LCDR Jeff "Donny G" Bosworth, who is heading to the Ragin' Bulls of VFA-37 ... he is ready to be a hinge. The Dragons are excited to continue building our deployment team and sharpen our skills in preparation for 2021. SSHWFGD!

VFA-147 ARGONAUTS BRING FIFTH-GENERATION TO THE FLEET by LT Ethan "Soft Kitty" Albrecht, USN

The Argonauts began 2020 with a focused effort on building foundational combat habit patterns. Using unit level training and the Lightning tactics and weapons syllabus (LTWS) opportunities, the squadron began the early stages of building a squadron culture centered on tactical excellence. While similar to the F/A-18 strike fighter weapons and tactics (SFWT) syllabus, LTWS is specifically designed to leverage fifth-generation capabilities and produce package commanders and vice division leads as the culminating combat qualification for first tour JOs. LTs James "Milburn" Matern and Thorys "Beaker" Stensrud, the first two CAT I F-35C *Lightning II* pilots to graduate from the FRS, completed the LTWS Combat Section Lead syllabus in less than one year. This significant milestone was the first of many for the Argos in 2020.

Throughout the year the squadron provided support for multiple Air Wing Fallon training events and participated in several CVW-2 large-force exercises. Simultaneously filling roles as both fighter and suppression of enemy air defenses aircraft, the Argos demonstrated that the integration of fifth-generation aircraft and combat systems coupled with sound execution would result in a more lethal CSG.

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In June, the Argonauts participated in NWSEP at Tyndall AFB. Showcasing the air-to-air lethality of the F-35C, the Argo team successfully exercised the end-to-end employment of two AIM-120C5 AMRAAMs and two AIM-9X Block I Sidewinder missiles versus historic, and we are humbled to have the opportunity to write it. DAMN PROUD! subscale aerial targets flying combat representative profiles.

Following NWSEP, the Argos turned around and departed for the first ever F-35C Advanced Readiness Program (ARP) at NAS Fallon. The det was tailored specifically for air-to-air training, leveraging professional adversary support and surface-to-air missile systems available on the Fallon Range Training Complex. The squadron executed 106 ARP sorties and completed 11 LTWS events while achieving an unprecedented kill ratio of 125:1. The Automatic Ground Collision Avoidance System as well as the Distributed Aperture System provided the Argos the ability to dynamically maneuver at night with reduced currency and proficiency requirements. This marked the first air-to-air ARP det to incorporate advanced night training against a peer adversary, proving that the F-35C owns the night!

All sorties were conducted at the division (4-ship) level and most sorties were led by first tour JOs, with two and four positions filled by junior wingmen. This included two newly minted "FNGs" from the FRS, who were immediately placed into advanced training events. All of the Argos' first tour nuggets performed exceptionally well. Their execution standards combined with the capabilities of the F-35C enabled mission success for every event.

The foundation of our success starts with the Argos maintenance department. Our Sailors consistently provided seven fully mission capable jets throughout the duration of the det. This allowed the Argos to fly with all required mission systems without missing a single sortie. The combined effect of fifth-generation Sailors, maintenance and execution standards were awe-inspiring. This is the future.

Upon returning from NAS Fallon, VFA-147 shifted its focus to airto-surface training. As soon as the squadron arrived home, the Argos team loaded and flew external pylons on fleet aircraft for the first time while executing a preplanned Non-Combat Expenditure Allowance expenditure. Flying multiple sorties a day to the Fallon Range Training Complex, Superior Valley and Yuma Ranges, the squadron dropped 41,000 pounds of ordnance and fired 2,595 rounds of 25 mm during both day and night conditions.

The aircraft's night systems and safety features enabled the squadron's newest pilot, LT Connor "Ask Jeeves" Deneen, to livefire the GPU-8/A 25 mm gun at night only four days after checking in from the FRS! As usual the professionalism of the Argos maintenance department, with a special shoutout to squadron ordnancemen, was directly responsible for VFA-147's success during the noncombat expenditure allocation. Day in, day out our Sailors flawlessly loaded gun pods, countermeasures and both inert and live ordnance on the aircraft with precision and efficiency. IYAOYAS!

The remainder of 2020 and 2021 will provide even greater challenges and opportunities for the Argonauts to conquer while demonstrating the capability of the F-35C Lightning II. The last two years of squadron history have been defining. The next 18 months will be





"IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES, IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES ..."

by CAPT Marcos Jasso, USN

fter completing an extended deployment post-Composite Training Unit Exercise and go, Team Battle Axe set the record for zero Hiberty incidents!

This was not an easy task. The warriors of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Strike Group spent 206 continuous days underway without a port call. It was amazing to witness the resiliency and dedication of the Sailors and their focus on mission requirements. Team Battle Axe completed 10,446 rotary- and fixed-wing sorties, 7,751 traps, 21,994.1 mishap-free flight hours, supported Operations Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) (166 over-thehorizon Afghanistan sorties) and Sentinel (OS) (112 Strait of Hormuz transit sorties) and directly maintained freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in the Fifth Fleet area of responsibility. The Ike and her strike group stood the watch.

How times have changed from the good old days of extended deployments with port calls and healthy force generation. The days of a normal flow of inbound replacements allowing outbound Sailors to meet permanent change of station transfers and career milestones are past. "On the job (deployment)" training with a nugget or new Sailor joining the team and getting right into the deployment rhythm, appears to be a thing of the past. Gone are the days of joining the Navy and seeing the world ... The pandemic has changed all that. Make no mistake the Navy will stand the watch. We will be ready to respond. But the Navy has always met this mark. The global pandemic has created a "Tale of Two Deployments" pre-COVID and post-COVID. Senior leadership, including CAGs and carrier COs, need to understand the current and future impact on our Sailors and their families.

THE

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A shoutout to CVW-17 and the Nimitz Strike Group. They arrived on station ready to execute mission and allowed our strike group to return home. We will pay it forward-Naval Aviation Enterprise teamwork.

VFA-131

In April the VFA-131 Wildcats launched into action off the coast of Oman, answering the nation's tasking and commencing operations from the North Arabian Sea. Operating on board USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), the Wildcats ensured freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz through surface combat air patrols and deliberate presence patrols. Their efforts resulted in the continued free flow of commerce in the region. The Wildcats also supported OFS with close air support in Afghanistan.

May brought VFA-131 and Team Battle Axe an opportunity for some rest as we conducted a "port call at sea." During a quick jaunt past the equator, the Wildcats participated in a Crossing the Line ceremony. King Neptune wasted no time ridding Ike of all her slimy pollywogs and ushering in a new crop of trusty shellbacks. Continuing their tradition of excellence, the Wildcats received Top Hook for a second consecutive line period as well as having their herculean maintenance efforts recognized with the Golden Wrench Award.

The squadron team has worked tirelessly to ensure that aircraft are well maintained and ready to fight. Between April and June, the Wildcats reported an overall 100 percent combat sortie completion rate. Throughout the record-setting deployment, VFA-131 and Team Battle Axe remained ready and eager to stand the watch. ONE TEAM, ONE FIGHT!

VFA-105

The Gunslingers conducted their 2020 deployment in historic fashion. After six months underway, the squadron proved it is filled with talent and capable of overcoming challenges never before seen on a deployment. Eisenhower surpassed the previous record of 160 consecutive days at sea on 24 June and ultimately spent 206 straight days underway. The Gunslingers supported OFS in Afghanistan and provided escort to Coalition vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz. This deployment provided a few unique experiences for the

squadron. The Gunslingers experienced two additional beer days on board Ike. Everyone was able to enjoy two beverages while eating BBQ and listening to music on the flight deck. VFA-105 also had an "at-sea port call" when flight operations were halted and everyone was given some welcome rest. During this break, a swim call took place, allowing Sailors to jump into the warm Arabian Sea and blow off some steam. Eisenhower then sailed south and crossed the equator. A Crossing the Line ceremony was conducted and all of the Gunslingers' pollywogs became trusty shellbacks.

With a 100 percent combat sortie completion rate, VFA-105 personnel maintained their status as professional and capable warfighters. No matter what events are going on in the world, VFA-105 will be ready and willing to go where our country needs us most. Tonight ... We Ride!

VAQ-130

The VAQ-130 Zappers had a rewarding and record-breaking quarter. As the Zappers continued their U.S. Fifth Fleet deployment supporting OS, they shattered the record for longest consecutive days at sea. In addition, the squadron completed 30 Growler Tactics and Weapons Program events, including one large-force employment (LFE). During the LFE junior aircrew integrated with all CVW-3 assets in a complex mission planning scenario. Additionally, LCDR Kenneth "Kitty" Kapp successfully qualified as a strike leader, continuing to push the envelope of tactics and directly enhancing the lethality of the air wing.

In August the Zappers wrapped up a seven-month deployment on board CVN-69, returning home after 206 consecutive days at sea. Upon return the Zappers went on post overseas movement (POM) leave and were able to take 10 days to spend valuable time with their friends and family. After POM the squadron refocused its efforts on flight operations and began preparing for its upcoming 2021 deployment.

In the process we have welcomed eight Sailors and promoted 17. Additionally, 14 Sailors received Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist qualification, and 10 received Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist qualification. In the face of a challenging operational environment, the Zappers continue to excel and are ready to overcome any obstacles on the horizon.

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A VFA-131 Wildcats F/A-18E Super Hornet returns to NAS Oceana after deployment, 6 Aug '20.

USAF, Sen Airman Brandon Cribela



A VFA-105 Gunslingers F/A-18E pictured during a mission in the Fifth Fleet area of responsibility, 8 Jun '20.

USN, MC3 Isaac Champlin



An EA-18G Growler of the VAQ-130 Zappers launches from Eisenhower, 16 Feb '20.

HSC-7

The third quarter was extremely successful for the HSC-7 Dusty Dogs. The squadron conducted 409 sorties and flew 1,117 hours during a challenging deployment on board *Ike*, expending 263 unguided rockets, 13,000 7.62 mm rounds, 10,800 .50-cal. rounds and 8,430 rounds of 20 mm ammunition. Four additional strafe operators were qualified, and the readiness of our anti-surface warfare crews was maintained. Despite reduced manpower in critical billets due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Dusty Dogs overcame the challenges and got the job done safely and efficiently. This included the delivery of 1,226,835 pounds of cargo and 568 passengers throughout Carrier Strike Group Ten. HSC-7 consistently answered every call and accomplished the mission with success and professionalism.

HSM-74

by LTs Nathan Beatty and Austin Schumacher, USN

"This is Iranian air defense reaching out to you on channel guard. Check your navigation system and maintain safe distance!" This is the standard and familiar query for aircrews operating in the Gulf of Oman. This is one of a number of seemingly irregular occurrences that one soon finds is a routine pattern of life in the region.

The HSM-74 Swamp Foxes are attached to a carrier strike group, but our combat element (CEL) was in a unique position during this deployment. It operated away from the carrier for the majority of the deployment supporting OFS to ensure maritime stability and security in the region. This deployment was the first for a majority of personnel in our CEL, and while expectations did not always match reality, training prepared us more than we realized.

Day-to-day operations are both repetitive and unique, but each day provides an opportunity to exercise the MH-60R Seahawk's many missions and capabilities. Wake up, brief, fly, produce post-mission products, sleep and repeat in some sort of similar order the following day. Even though each day repeats the same cycle, the content of each flight varies and is vital to the fleet. This gave the entire team a strong sense of mission accomplishment.

Our experience in the Gulf of Oman was busy but provided the entire team valuable experience for future deployments and operations. Throughout the deployment the following became clear: HSM's capabilities have proven a crucial asset in Coalition forces' ability to maintain security in the region and cross-service and -platform integration is becoming more critical.

USN, MC3 Kody A. Phillips

The HSC-7 Dusty Dogs conducted a myriad of operations during a deployment including this vertical replenishment for USS Truxtun (DDG 103), 3 Mar 20.

The capabilities and flexibility the MH-60R and its aircrew brought to the fight proved to be unparalleled in support of OFS. After a few days of flight operations in the area, it became clear that even though we were in one of the most heavily trafficked maritime regions of the world, an aircrew could develop, verify and create a recognized maritime picture in a single flight. This was maintained and updated by follow-on crews.

Every day brought new opportunities for the aircrews to employ the aircraft's sensors. Any given flight could consist of electronic warfare collection, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), airsea rescue (ASR), unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) interception or documenting newsworthy events in the region. Organic execution of operations supporting OFS proved successful. However, integration across platforms and intelligence assets within the strike group were instrumental in the ability to effectively conduct high-profile missions in the area.

Cross-service and -platform integration will continue to be an important aspect of successful operations in the Gulf of Oman and Strait of Hormuz. Combined air operations center and carrier air wing asset coordination for missions like strait transits proved effective and grew during our time in the region. Assets that we coordinated and worked with included MQ-9 SkyGuardians, P-8 Poseidons, F/A-18 Super Hornets, F-16 Fighting Falcons and F-35 Lightning IIs. This mixed cocktail of air assets in a single LFE presents combatants with an overwhelming deterrent from the air. However, real-time integration of UAV intelligence in combination with manned ISR/ASR platforms will continue to pave the way for future operations in the region.





VFA-102 DIAMONDBACKS

by LT Aaron "FNG" Vanada, USN

Thile 2020 has seen its fair share of uncertainty, one thing remains constant. The Diamondbacks are back at sea, on board VUSS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), proving U.S. naval forces can fly and sail anywhere around the globe.

From May to early June, CVW-5 visited the historic island of Iwo Jima on the 75th anniversary year of the storied battle that took place there, taking full advantage of the time to explore the rich history and honor those who fought. Reflection gave way to the familiar routine of field carrier landing practice (FCLP). Once complete CVW-5 regrouped on board CVN 76, and Carrier Strike Group Five (CSG-5) turned west toward the disputed waters of the South China Sea to support freedom of navigation and ensure the lawful use of the sea and airspace guaranteed to all nations by international law.

Once on station Reagan was joined by USS Nimitz (CVN 68) with embarked CVW-17, and the two ships conducted dual carrier operations in one of the world's busiest sea lanes. The Diamondbacks were in their element demonstrating flexibility and firepower, flying predominantly at night and leading CVW-5 in sorties and hours flown. Integrating with old friends and colleagues from CVW-17 on board Nimitz provided unique training opportunities.

Following sustained flight operations in the South China Sea, CVW-5 had the opportunity to train and integrate with military forces of our international partners in the Indo-Pacific region, including the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF). As Reagan turned north, VFA-102 participated in Joint training with USAF F-16 Fighting Falcons and expeditionary EA-18G Growlers from VAQ-131 based at Misawa AB, Japan. The unique airspace provided an ideal opportunity for the *Diamondbacks* to put their air-to-surface skills on display during several close-air-support and combat search-and-rescue events. Squadron forward air controllers (airborne) and rescue mission commanders were afforded the unusual opportunity to integrate the capabilities of USAF Special Operations CV-22 Osprey and MC-130J Hercules aircraft and CVW-5's MH-60R Seahawks of the HSC-12 Golden Falcons during some dynamic training scenarios.

By the midpoint of deployment, the *Diamondbacks* had completed 2,309 sorties encompassing 3,536 mishap-free flight hours, a true testament to the professionalism and dedication to maintenance practiced by squadron maintainers. The ordnance team ensured the safe loading and expenditure of 46,000 pounds of air-to-surface ordnance and 7,957

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USN, MC2 Samantha Jetzer

rounds of 20 mm ammunition in support of critical unit level training. Additionally, LTs David "Blunderbuss" McGowan and Sam "POPO" Vermilyea completed the strike fighter weapons and tactics Level III syllabus, earning their prestigious Combat Section Lead designations.

The squadron bid farewell to LT Gordon "Big Beautiful WSO" Finlay who is on his way to the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School. While on the high seas the squadron welcomed aboard LCDR Cody "Brosef" Forsythe, LT Aaron Vanada and LTJGs Andrew Johnston and Albert Choi.

The Diamondbacks are poised to proudly carry out America's commitment to regional partners and to maintaining freedom of navigation throughout the Indo-Pacific region as an integral part of the Forward-Deployed Naval Forces.

VFA-27 ROYAL MACES

by LT Jessica "MWB" Desousa, USN

This summer the VFA-27 Royal Maces participated in a FCLP detachment (det) to Iwo To (formerly called Iwo Jima). The det allowed squadron pilots the opportunity to hone their proficiency in flying and carrier landing procedures prior to the next deployment on board Ronald Reagan.



The VFA-27 Royal Maces current Commanding Officer CDR Joseph "CAPS" Hubley conducts a flyby overhead a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force ship in the South China Sea. 7 Jul '20.

The extraordinary impacts of COVID-19 compelled the command to work through the FCLP det in unique ways. Squadron personnel moved in waves from predeployment sequestration to either Iwo To or CVN 76. During the sequestration period, another contingent of squadron personnel maintained the aircraft to ensure full and continued readiness. This unusual triple-site operational footprint allowed the squadron to maintain full readiness in support of U.S. Seventh Fleet strategic initiatives and higher Center for Disease Control COVID-19 headquarters prevention and mitigation protocol. Once the last wave of Maces arrived on board CVN 76 in June, the entire command was together again for the first time since February.

In July the squadron, alongside the rest of CVW-5, stacked up with CVW-17 on board Nimitz for dual carrier operations.

Halfway through the Indo-Pacific deployment, VFA-27 held an airborne change-of-command ceremony. CDR Joseph "CAPS" Hubley relieved CDR Brent "BOB" Jaquith, and CDR Michael "PELLET" Donovan assumed the duties of executive officer. CDR Jaquith inspired the Maces to focus on priorities of teamwork, professionalism and excellence without arrogance. Under his leadership, VFA-27 met or exceeded all mission requirements during multiple deployments, directly contributing to the mission success of CVW-5 and Commander, Task Force 70.

SHADOWHAWKS MAINTAIN THE WATCH IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

by LT Elizabeth Shaffer, USN

Underway on board Ronald Reagan, VAQ-141 has dominated the electronic attack mission in the Indo-Pacific theater. Amid worldwide safety concerns over COVID-19, VAQ-141 is deployed with CVW-5 to stand the watch in that contested region.

While on deployment, the squadron participated in dual carrier ops with Nimitz and increased our lethality in the U.S. Seventh Fleet area of responsibility. Demonstrating outstanding professionalism, Reagan and the embarked CVW-5 team operated as the night carrier for 10 days while safely generating daily surge-level sortie counts and leading several large-force strike exercises. Conducting the highest number of sorties and flight hours among all operational electronic attack squadrons, the Shadowhawks set the pace for the community.

The squadron successfully collaborated with the RAAF and JMSDF and in the span of two months, traveled across the equator twice and executed efficient and safe operations with our Allies despite the pandemic limitations.

"We were impressed with the RAAF and JMSDF professionalism in conducting operations, and we hope to work with them more in the future," said LT Derrick "Lennie" Petett, a Shadowhawks pilot. "They're like us, but different."

Although COVID-19 has put the world on edge, the Shadowhawks are always ready to provide the world's best airborne electronic attack in the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility.

HSC-12 GOLDEN FALCONS

Flying the Navy's MH-60S Seahawk out of NAF Atsugi, Japan, HSC-12 is accustomed to deploying every year on board Ronald Reagan in support of CSG-5. This year however, has been unlike any other as a forward-deployed squadron. After getting underway in April, the squadron has worked nonstop on board the boat. Strict COVID-19 prevention measures have required the carrier to remain at sea continuously, foregoing the usual port calls for additional training and maintenance that typically occur mid-deployment.

Despite restrictions due to the threat of the pandemic, the squadron participated in trilateral operations involving U.S., Australian and Japanese forces as we operated together in the South China Sea for the first time in nearly 50 years. HSC-12 also benefited from numerous opportunities to work with the onboard explosive ordnance disposal unit to maintain proficiency in helicopter rope suspension techniques and helicopter visit, board, search and seizure. HSC-12 maintained support of Reagan and the rest of the strike group through vertical replenishment, medical evacuations and logistics runs.

HSC-12 and the Ronald Reagan Strike Group will continue their operations around the Western Pacific as the squadron looks forward to continuing opportunities to help project power, maintain lethality and conduct meaningful training with our own troops and those of our nation's Allies.

By LT Victoria "BSOD" McCrave, USN



LT Cody "Handy" Brown of the VAQ-140 Shadowhawks conducts a tanking evolution with an F/A-18E.



The HSC-12 Golden Falcons practice helicopter rope suspension techniques during deployment.

HSM-77 SABERHAWKS

As the only Forward-Deployed Naval Forces carrier-based MH-60R squadron, the Saberhawks of HSM-77 flew more than 1,900 hours as part of CVW-5 while embarked on board Ronald Reagan and USS Antietam (CG 54) during April and February. Lovingly named the "Combat Capybaras," HSM-77's combat element (CEL) has worked tirelessly in support of CVW-5 since first getting underway on board Antietam in late February. Due to COVID-19 protocols, the CEL has been embarked continually since that time, two months earlier than originally planned. They were joined in early May by the squadron's main body on board Reagan after it completed a predeployment sequestration over the course of several weeks to ensure a COVID-free environment aboard the aircraft carrier.

The Saberhawks have protected CVW-5 during daily operations involving freedom of navigation missions and multiple strait transits, including one through the Spratly Islands, international exercises and high-end training opportunities. The latter included expenditure of AGM-114 Hellfire missiles and Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System laser-guided rockets as well as maritime strike missions involving the entire air wing. The Sabrehawks, working with the HSC-12 Golden Falcons, flew 24-hour operations during strait transits, providing armed reconnaissance, strike coordination and services. The squadron also



conducted multiple flights as part of dual carrier operations in the South China Sea with Nimitz. HSM-77 worked with the HSM-73 Battlecats of CVW-17 and the HSM-51 Warlords to provide surface warfare, antisubmarine warfare (ASW) and electronic warfare support to both carrier strike groups.

Approaching midcruise, HSM-77 worked alongside the JMSDF and RAN, conducting shipboard landings and ASW exercises while strengthening international relations, cooperation and interoperability.

Throughout their time on board CVN 76, the Saberhawks have shown immeasurable resilience, dedication and flexibility in the face of a high operational tempo, changing circumstances and ever-present challenges posed by a pandemic. Saberhawk Sailors have advanced in rate at record numbers, earned new qualifications, excelled in physical readiness and enhanced their Japanese language skills. They boosted morale during carrier-wide functions that included a steel beach picnic and swim call in early July where squadron aircrew served as rescue swimmers to ensure all hands could safely enjoy their time in the open ocean.

The Saberhawks continued into the second half of the deployment excited and determined to continue their pursuit of combat sustainability, professionalism and pride in applying their dynamic capabilities

to CVW-5, CSG-5 and U.S. Seventh Fleet operations. Protect the Patch — Respect the Hawk — Fear the Saber!







USS George H.W. Bush CAPT G. Robert Aquilar

> CVW-7 CAPT Nathan Ballou

HSC-5 NIGHTDIPPERS by CWO2 Jill Ingersoll, USN

n April 2019, the HSC-5 Nightdippers and the rest of CVW-7 embarked on board USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) as part of Carrier *Strike Group Twelve* (CSG-12) for an around-the-world deployment encompassing operations in U.S. Second, Sixth, Fifth, Seventh and Third Fleets. While in the Mediterranean, the Nightdippers conducted multiple operational and training missions with Mendez Nunez (F-104) of the Spanish navy, conducting the first multinational vertical replenishment (VERTREP) for the frigate.

After a port call in Palma, Spain, hosting many community leaders and key members of the Ministry of Defense, HSC-5 deployed a small detachment (det) supporting U.S. Africa Command's security cooperation efforts with Tunisian Defense Forces. The det trained and built partnerships with its Tunisian counterparts through mixed aircraft formations that focused on insertion and extraction methods. interoperability and maintenance procedures supporting sustained employment of their newly acquired UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters.

On short notice, CSG-12 headed to the Fifth Fleet area of responsibility where it remained for the majority of its deployment supporting strategic efforts to deter Iranian aggression. While there, HSC-5 conducted missions in support of Operations Inherent Resolve and Freedom's Sentinel. The squadron flew multiple training missions into Masirah, USN, MC3 Brett Walker

Oman, including terrain flight currency, combat search and rescue mission profiles with the air wing and personnel recovery operations with Omani Special Forces.

Meanwhile, HSC-5 supported a det of two helicopters and 30 personnel on board USNS Arctic (T-AOE 8), supporting critical logistics and vertical replenishment missions to all Fifth Fleet and Coalition assets. Finally in January 2020, Lincoln proceeded to Seventh and into Third Fleet, completing her deployment home-port change to San Diego. The Nightdippers then flew home to Norfolk.

Two months later, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the members of HSC-5 to answer the country's call for help once again. The World-Famous Nightdippers actively provided essential mission support for USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) assigned to Commander, Task Force 120 for the New York City COVID-19 outbreak relief operations. The dedicated det provided airlift support ranging from patient transport to the movement of essential equipment. "It is truly an amazing opportunity for HSC-5 to work with Comfort and the tremendous individuals dedicated to helping their fellow citizens," LCDR Andrea Giuliano, Det-2 officer in charge, said during the operations. "So often our actions are utilized overseas, and it is an incredible opportunity to provide direct support for those here at home." Upon the hospital ship's arrival, LCDR Giuliano, LT Claire Calaway, AWS1 Blaine Furrer and AWS2 Brandon Terry transported Commander, U.S. Second Fleet VADM Andrew Lewis to the ship pierside in the Hudson River.

Additionally, a crew commanded by LT Brandon Cespedes expeditiously responded when a New York hospital's ventilation system crashed. On 8 April LTs Cespedes and Dana Milam, AWSCS Matthew Royer and AWS1 Robert Crouch received tasking for a high priority mission taking critical medical equipment and ventilation filters to T-AH 20 for the local hospitals in need of help. Their rapid response in deteriorating weather provided necessary protective equipment and filtration systems to aid in combatting the pandemic.

These missions are examples of HSC-5's support whenever and wherever needed. The squadron maintenance team, flight crews and support personnel are always prepared to live up to our motto, Rescue, Protect and Deliver. The Nightdippers answer the call every day deployed abroad and here at home.





USS GERALD R. FORD

by CAPT J.J. "Yank" Cummings, USN

he mighty warship USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN 78) has graduated from the "Around the Fleet" section of this esteemed publication to In Marshal with an attached air wing. *Ford* is now attached to Carrier Strike Group Twelve (CSG-12) and partnered with CVW-8 and Destroyer Squadron Two, which means readers of The Hook now can gaze with admiration upon the mug shots of the baldest but undoubtedly best looking CVN/CVW front office in the Navy, CAG Josh "Flipper" Sager and me. A subtle reminder on how to think about this ship: We need to focus on

creating unique Ford-class operations and remember this is not a Nimitzclass carrier. The old way of doing business is not the Ford way. The F-35 Lighting II and F/A-18E/F Super Hornet are completely different airplanes, each with specific capabilities that require unique employment techniques. The same holds true for Ford and the Nimitz class. This ship requires a flushing of status quo thinking down the drain so we can identify how best to take advantage of the technological improvements that she encompasses. We are only halfway through post delivery test and trials (PDT&T), so this is a work in progress. With each underway we learn more about our unique systems and how best to groom them for deployment.

RDML Craig Clapperton and his staff embarked Ford for a second time in late July to resume grooming of their command and control spaces and continue operationalizing the ship at the CSG level. CVW-8 cyclic operations were cut short during our April underway

so a solid set of data points for *Ford* air operations was not gathered. We did however get a few days of air-to-ground sorties with inert ordnance allowing for the first time a buildup, breakout, transfer and loading of ordnance on air wing assets. The ordnancemen were a bit out of sorts with the loss of the "bomb farm," but that is one of several conceptof-operations we will be attacking in future at-sea periods. CVW-8 liked the increase of flight-deck acreage in front of the island and the in-deck fueling stations along the starboard side foul line. The Junior Officer Protection Association had good things to say about having a head in every stateroom, especially during general quarters. CVW-8 took detailed notes and handed us a 20-page TOPGUN-style debrief on Ford goods and others. We have started working with the Program Office and Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic to address modifications for possible inclusion in the 2021 shipyard maintenance period. We have another CSG-12/CVW-8 embark in early November, and our plan is to do another Tailored Ship's Training Availability-like event.

Ford now has a lifetime total of more than 4,000 cats/traps, with 3.250 completed over the last seven months. We are still experiencing occasional nuisance faults that require either a rapid software reset or a more time-consuming system reset. Naval Air Systems Command reps

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and engineers who ride with us for every underway take good notes and are working and then installing software modifications to address these issues and to increase our operational availability. None of these faults are related to safety of flight with either the cat shot or arrestment. In my opinion, PDT&T has been effective in identifying system upgrades needed to get the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System and Advanced (EMALS) Arresting Gear (AAG) ready for deployment.

Achieving cats and traps on the ship that I have the privilege of commanding has been one of the most memorable moments of my career. I have eight traps on Ford and can now comment somewhat intelligently on the experience with the caveat that I am a mouth breather and barely average ball flyer who will not use multisyllabic test pilot words. The EMALS shot reminds me of jamming the gas pedal in a Tesla — INSTANT acceleration and no, I don't own a Tesla, but I did beg a rich friend of mine to let me drive his once. The quick acceleration is computer-controlled and gets the jet within .5 knots of the programmed Aircraft Launch Bulletin speed. The ride off the end feels much smoother than steam. The initial part of the AAG trap is noticeably different because you are NOT flying into a Nimitz-style wall of hydraulic pressure. On board Ford, the below decks machinery pays out the purchase cable during the first half second of the arrestment, so it feels like you might have hook skipped. As the motor generator and water twister start eating up arrestment energy, the deceleration is more *Nimitz*esque.

By the way, Precision Landing Mode (PLM) approaches are unreal, and I will never go back to a manual or auto pass (insert Paddles' sigh of relief). A PLM RATE pass can even keep me off the one wire. I have not graduated to PATH yet, but will get there before my Change of Command. I don't miss the mid-1990s seven-symbol F-14A Tomcat head-up display (HUD) with the worthless velocity vector. A humble shoutout to all the *Phantom*, *Crusader*, *Intruder*, *Panther* and *Scooter* drivers who didn't need no stinking HUD or velocity vector to get aboard. And to my Grumman Iron Works Tracer and Hawkeye-driver brothers and sisters, I tip my skull cap to you — the last of the pure ball flyers. Keep the faith.

Ford uses only 25 percent of the available power on the electric plant. leaving plenty of excess for future power requirements, weapons systems and CAG Sager's XBox.

We have six more underway periods before full ship shock trials, which should run from June to late August 2021. In September, Ford will head back to Newport News for its first planned incremental availability. When that shipyard event is complete, the mighty Warship 78 will start work ups. This will come very quickly. The sense of urgency during the

next six underways is real. We need to get this ship ready for deployment. We will because ... WE ARE WARSHIP 78!





CARRIER AIR WING EIGHT ABOARD USS GERALD R. FORD by LT Dan "Stank" Efinger, USN

CVW-8 embarked on board Gerald R. Ford for a second time from 26 May to 7 June, continuing air wing integration efforts with the "firstin-class" carrier. *Ford* is more than halfway through her PDT&T phase of operations, during which the ship conducts Independent Steaming Events (ISE) at sea to test and certify the ship's combat systems and crew, and support carrier qualifications for pilots.

Following successful flight-deck and carrier air traffic control center certifications during ISE 9 in February, CVW-8 reembarked Ford for ISE 10. During this most recent underway, CVW-8 built upon previous successes with a much larger footprint of air wing personnel and aircraft, while conducting the first-ever cyclic operations on board the warship.

Although the underway did not proceed exactly as hoped, the Factory-Wolverine team scored significant wins. CVW-8 and Ford Sailors loaded, launched and expended the first heavy inert weapons from the carrier, tested newly operational advanced weapons elevators and conducted new ordnance handling procedures. The air wing also "pressurized" Ford by making use of all CVW spaces and support services, including the aircraft intermediate maintenance department, squadron work centers, berthing and messing.

Returning home to the reality of maintaining readiness in a pandemic environment, CVW-8 leveraged newly linked simulators to conduct supplemental training events. As part of Fleet Synthetic Trainer-Airborne (FST-A), CVW-8 squadrons linked seven Tactical Operational Flight Trainers across four different type/model/series (T/M/S) aircraft, simulating an opposed replenishment-at-sea scenario. This event marked the first time that tactical air (TACAIR) support and rotary-wing aircraft shared common environmental, threat, sensor and weapons data via FST-A, a new capability as of this spring.

During the event, MH-60R aircrew from NAS Jacksonville, Fla., coordinated with MH-60S aircrew from NAS North Island, Calif., to defend a notional attack from a fast attack craft/fast inshore attack craft. Simultaneously, MH-60R aircrew from NavSta Mayport, Fla., conducted anti-submarine warfare operations, and F/A-18E/F aircrew from NAS Oceana, Va., conducted a standoff maritime strike. In all, three CVW-8 squadrons, the HSM-70 Spartans, VFA-213 Blacklions and VFA-34 Blue Blasters, worked alongside other fleet squadrons and weapons schools to remotely plan, brief, execute and debrief a virtual, largeforce, constructive exercise. As an added benefit, crews accomplished the training with no fuel burned or per diem accrued during the extended maintenance phase of our Optimized-Fleet Response Plan (OFRP) cycle.

While fleet support team. Joint exercise and group commander events facilitate synthetic training across ship, rotary-wing and TACAIR units, they are often only available to late stage carrier strike group/ expeditionary strike group units and include far less shared data across T/M/S. FST-A events provide a level of integration that is new and accessible, representing a critical enabler to integrated training before the OFRP cycle begins. By pushing the envelope of synthetic air wing training, CVW-8 is postured for long-term successes that will maximize integrated training, regardless of temporary additional duty funding, COVID stop movement orders or OFRP resourcing priorities.

In other action, the VFA-37 Ragin' Bulls recently returned from a highly successful two-week detachment in Panama City, Fla. The Bulls took their Lot 23 F/A-18E Super Hornets and an 80-person maintenance team to Tyndall AFB to participate in the Naval Weapons System Evaluation Program (NWSEP).

Team Bull flawlessly employed 10 AIM-9 air-to-air missiles, including four AIM-9M, four AIM-9X Block I and two AIM-9X Block II, all while conducting an impressive 100 percent sortie-completion rate. Multiple advanced missile profiles using telemetry were proof-ofconcept shots, testing the advanced capabilities of the AIM-9X Block I and Block II. Every Ragin' Bulls pilot and one lucky CVW-8 staff pilot fired at least one missile, including five first-time shooters.

When not participating in NWSEP live fire events, VFA-37 conducted dissimilar aircraft training with F-15E Strike Eagles from the 336th Fighter Squadron out of Sevmour Johnson AFB, N.C., further enhancing readiness and strengthening Joint interoperability. The squadron successfully demonstrated to themselves, the strike fighter community and our adversaries abroad that the Navy will not only continue to operate in the dynamic global pandemic environment, but also will execute its mission with precision and dominance, contributing to the combat lethality of our frontline naval forces.

HSM-70 SPARTANS

by LTJG Max Bevill, USN

In the midst of a challenging time for our nation and military, HSM-70 has maintained a high level of proficiency and readiness. While at home at NAS Jacksonville, crews have maintained a fast-paced schedule while minimizing the impact of a pandemic. In early June, HSM-70 embarked Gerald R. Ford to operate with CVW-8. HSM-70 supplied four helicopters for this first embark and worked with HSC, VFA and VAW squadrons to stress-test the ship's capabilities. HSM-70 proved a versatile part of the air wing's composition and was integral in the planning, briefing and execution of fast attack, fast inshore attack, maritime strike and close-air-support events.

This summer HSM-70 worked with VFA-213 and VFA-34 in Virginia, the HSC-23 Wildcards in San Diego and the HSM Weapons School via FST-A-linked simulator events to maintain and improve proficiency and interoperability among the MH-60R, MH-60S and F/A-18E/F platforms. This marked the first ever TACAIR and rotarvwing FST-A event, which linked seven tactical operational flight trainers of four T/M/S (VFA, HSM, HSC) across four bases and three time zones. Despite some information technology growing pains, the CVW-8 team event created a buzz across Naval Aviation leadership by demonstrating the ability to plan, brief, execute and debrief large-force exercises virtually and remotely. It was a heavy lift and made possible through the initiative of LT Willis "Wick" Hobson (HSM-70), LCDRs Andrew "Woodshop" Ruisi (VFA-213) and Andrew "Smug B" Moore (VFA-34) from CVW-8.

HSM-70 is currently supporting USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81) with a detachment (det) of two helicopters. Adhering to strict COVID-19 mitigation procedures and testing, all members of the det received clean bills of health and embarked from Norfolk to head east to take the fight to the enemy. Come and Take Them - MOLON LABE!







TOPHATTERS CAP OFF 100 YEARS WITH BATTLE E

by LT John "Bourdain" Conaway, USN **T**FA-14 celebrated its centennial in 2019, culminating with a week of events and festivities at NAS Pensacola in October. Between bouts of raucous celebration for all, *Tophatters* past and present enjoyed a Khaki Beach BBQ, golf tournament and all hands dining out at the National Naval Aviation Museum.

VFA-14 used the detachment (det) to Florida to conduct valuable December 2019 saw a Change of Command on board NAS Lemoore

dissimilar air combat training, fighting and winning against USAF F-35 Lightning IIs and F-22 Raptors out of Eglin AFB. This training opportunity honed the *Tophatter* pilots' skills in basic fighter maneuvers and secured VFA-14's dominance in the skies over the Gulf of Mexico. as the Lids bid farewell to the 88th commanding officer of VFA-14, CDR Matthew "Koko" Nieswand, as he was relieved by CDR Erik "Dook" Kenny. We wish Koko fair winds, following seas and nothing but the best. We hope you look back on your time with the Tophatters as the best portion of your long and storied naval career.

In February 2020, VFA-14 conducted a highly successful readiness det to St. Louis, Mo., after which, the squadron quickly returned to sea and spent a week in March embarked on board CVW-9's newly assigned ship, USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). Despite having over a week of underway time available, the Tophatters qualified every squadron pilot for carrier operations within 24 hours.

Most recently, Commander, Naval Air Forces awarded VFA-14 the Battle "E" Efficiency Award establishing the squadron as the best strike fighter squadron in the Pacific Fleet. During squadron quarters, the

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as THE OLDEST & BOLDEST!

VAW-117 WALLBANGERS

by LTJG Nick Neighbors, USN

The VAW-117 Wallbangers returned home in May after completing the transition from the venerable E-2C Hawkeye to the newest variant, the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye. They are the second at NBVC Point Mugu to make the jump to the new airframe. The squadron trained at NAS Norfolk, Va., for five months with the VAW-120 Greyhawks, the fleet replacement squadron, gaining the skills required to operate and maintain this cutting edge technology. Aircrew and maintainers gained qualifications and skills enabling the Navy to designate the Wallbangers an operationally capable E-2D squadron.

The squadron is now preparing to take this aircraft to the fleet, ready to deploy around the world in support of the nation's defense strategy. Most recently, VAW-117 completed carrier qualifications with CVW-9 on board Abraham Lincoln. The squadron hosted a change-of-command ceremony in September as CDR Michael "Heavin" Stephen relieved CDR Ryan "Mouth" Carstens. We wish CDR Carstens fair winds and following seas in his future assignments.

HSC-14 CHARGERS

by LT Tyne Jones, USN

The HSC-14 *Chargers* have adapted to the unprecedented challenges of 2020 and excelled in all realms through a dynamic and challenging maintenance phase. Like our sibling CVW-9 squadrons, HSC-14 has been adjusting to the COVID-19 restrictions with the latest and most up-to-date policies. Our Sailors have adapted wholeheartedly to variable manning and new duty shifts, mandatory face



coverings at work, six-foot social distancing whenever possible and daily temperature checks before entering the spaces. While incorporating these new standards, the Chargers remain committed to our mission essentials, meeting and exceeding training requirements, implementing new systems, standing regular ready duty search-and-rescue (SAR) watches and providing personnel and aircraft for quarterly carrier qualifications. The *Chargers* have risen above and beyond to support the various requests from our fleet brethren beyond the HSC community, including aerial firefighting support to contain the fire on board USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) and SAR and logistics support of USS Triploi's (LHA 7) home port change to the West Coast.

As was spotlighted in the national news this July, LHD 6 erupted in flames while docked at NavBase San Diego. Ground firefighting crews worked for hours to limit the fire's spread, protecting the nearby downtown area from the encroaching blaze. After the fire burned for a full day, Helicopter Sea Combat Wing, Pacific requested HSC-14 to support aerial firefighting operations. Eager to help our fellow Sailors in the effort, the Chargers took to the fight. HSC-14's maintenance department jumped into action reconfiguring aircraft from a planned strafe mission into a light and limber aerial firefighting configuration carrying external under slung "Bambi Bucket" water deployment systems. After nearly a week of effort a combination of ground, air and sea assets finally contained the fire. The Chargers acted quickly with discipline and determination to move us to a firefighting posture, remaining flexible and reliable throughout the multiday endeavor involving many commands.

HSC-14 recently sent a det of two MH-60S aircraft to Tripoli docked in Pascagoula, Miss., to support its hemisphere-spanning cruise as it made its way to a new home port on the West Coast. The det provided primary SAR support on board while maintaining personnel's training and expertise with regular flight operations.

The *Chargers* continue to fly and train for various missions in preparation for our next work-up cycle in 2021. We are working together as a team, accomplishing all tasks expected and more. Our Sailors and aircrew are exceeding every expectation and rising to meet any challenge. Our motto rang true in the first half of 2020, and we will make sure it continues in the next half, no matter the trial. Day and Night, Lightning Strikes!



The VAW-117 Wallbangers trained with the VAW-120 Greyhawks during transition to the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye this year.



View from the cockpit of an HSC-14 MH-60S as the Chargers provided firefighting support during the fire on board USS Bonhomme Richard (LHA 6) in July.





BIG STICK COMPLETES HISTORIC DEPLOYMENT

by MC3 Brandon Richardson 9 July USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) returned to NAS North Island, marking the completion of a historic six-month deployment. The ship departed on 17 January, a combat ready ship's force and air wing team with the latest training and equipment available. While there was little expectation that infectious disease prevention and mitigation would become an essential tool in the carrier strike group's arsenal, the team deployed prepared to wield some of latest instruments of deterrence and, if required, win decisively against potential adversaries. This included a new weapon that pushes the boundaries of artificial intelligence. The new AGM-158C Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) is an air-launched cruise missile developed for the U.S. Navy and USAF, and Theodore Roosevelt is the first West Coast aircraft carrier to deploy with the groundbreaking weapon.

"It's one of the smartest missiles we've ever seen," said LTJG Misty Beck, the ship's weapons department's quality assurance division officer and a former chief aviation ordnanceman with more than 10 years of experience in the weapons community. "The LRASM is designed to employ artificial intelligence, which enables it to autonomously track targets. It can even distinguish threat ships from neutral or friendly vessels in crowded areas."

"The LRASM's state-of-the-art technology is a powerful addition in deterring adversaries and winning the high-end fight," said CAPT Carlos Sardiello, then commanding officer of *Roosevelt*. "Incorporating leading edge technology weaponry aboard our ship bolsters Theodore Roosevelt's capability as part of a credible, lethal fighting force."

TR deployed to the U.S. Seventh Fleet area of operations where it After four days in port, CVN 71 set sail for its next destination. En supported maritime security operations with the other ships of *Carrier* route the plan for the port visit changed drastically. A virus that was Strike Group Nine (CSG-9) and numerous other U.S. Navy, partner sweeping across the globe attacked Theodore Roosevelt. Upon diagnosing positive cases of SARS-CoV-2, the virus nation and allied naval units in the area.

The strike group teamed with USS America (LHA 6) and her escorts three times during the deployment. The pairing demonstrated how carrier and

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expeditionary strike groups can augment their respective unique mission sets to deliver a versatile and resilient fighting force to commanders.

After a routine port call in Guam, Theodore Roosevelt traveled to the next scheduled engagement in Vietnam, becoming only the second carrier to visit that nation since the 1970s. Accompanied by the Ticonderogaclass guided-missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill (CG 52), TR anchored off the coast of Da Nang on 5 March 2020, to commemorate 25 years of diplomatic relations between the United States and Vietnam.

'This visit demonstrates the strength of our bilateral relations and highlights our continued cooperation with partner countries and our strong support for the region," said RDML Stu Baker, commander of CSG-9 at the time of the historic port call. "It also serves as evidence of the U.S.'s commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific where strong, independent nations respect one another's sovereignty and uphold the rule of law."

Roosevelt's Sailors made the most of their time during the historic trip, participating in cultural and professional exchanges, community service projects, sports competitions and receptions.

AO3 Khaden D. Vaughn, who volunteered for a community service project at a Da Nang orphanage and charity center, said that the experience provided him a fresh perspective on what it means to be a U.S. Navy Sailor.

"We say in our creed that we 'represent the fighting spirit of the Navy and those who have gone before us to defend freedom and democracy around the world," said Vaughn. "Interacting with the kids at the center reminded me that something as simple as playing basketball with children can be a part of defending freedom."

that causes COVID-19, among its Sailors, the ship continued to Guam and began an unprecedented and widely publicized



battle with the virus. More than 1,000 crewmembers tested positive and were put into isolation on NavBase Guam. With the exception of a small caretaker crew, the Sailors aboard TR who tested negative were evacuated and guarantined in local hotels and on base facilities thanks to a rapid coordinated response in cooperation with the government of Guam.

The crew that remained aboard the ship consisted of approximately 800 Sailors who systematically disinfected every space on board in order to turn her into a "clean" ship.

"We take our teams and go to the assigned area to soap it down and disinfect it," said LS2 Kimore Whyte, a member of the cleaning task force.

The small force worked for nearly a month to ensure that every part of the ship was verified as disinfected. Once their work was complete, the first group of Sailors who had been secluded in quarantine for weeks was able to return to a clean ship to begin preparing for the return to sea.

"Never in my twenty years have I seen, or could've imagined anything like this," said CDR Josh Hill, Roosevelt's supply officer. "They don't teach this in school. We're learning on the fly. We're writing the book for history."

Hill's team of Sailors in the supply department was responsible for providing more than 100,000 meals over the course of the carrier's battle with COVID-19.

"What we do will likely be studied for years to come," Hill commented in an interview during the crisis. "All I can hope for is that we're doing it the right way. I'm sure we'll be judged, I'm sure we'll be critiqued, but when it's all said and done I know that this department, that this crew, can look anyone in the eye and say, 'We did it as best we could.'"

Staying connected and grounded with the mission and with shipmates and families at home in the COVID-19 socially distanced environment required innovation with constructive uses of social media and online collaboration tools. All available resources were leveraged to remain ready and resilient from closed social media pages and commercial live voice, video and collaboration applications, to secure video teleconferences, on-ship phone conferencing and the 1MC. Numerous former Theodore Roosevelt commanding officers and command master chiefs, along with some Hollywood celebrities, bolstered morale with their personal messages of support posted alongside the ship's ombudsmen and command leadership's messages of support and information on the closed social media page #TRAloneTogether.

The *Theodore Roosevelt's* medical department identified an unexpected efficiency while employing and validating the best counter-infectious disease protocols and procedures during the COVID-19 response. Personnel instituted telemedicine shipwide for non-COVID-19 related

medical needs and routine appointments, increasing opportunity for delivery of individual medical services while decreasing waiting in lines that could expose additional Sailors, both crew and medical personnel, to risk of COVID-19 unnecessarily.

"Telemedicine is something the Sailors appreciated and is likely here to stay," said Sardiello. "You just saved a great deal of Sailors' time, which is a priceless commodity at sea, making us more efficient and increasing personal satisfaction.'

After its battle with coronavirus, the ship joined the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group for dual carrier operations, demonstrating synergistic effects on capacity and capability. Once the two strike groups had trained and operated together, TR headed east, free of COVID-19, to complete its deployment and return to San Diego.

"This crew should feel extremely proud of what they have accomplished over the last six months," said RDML Doug Verissimo, who hoisted his flag as commander of CSG-9 during a scheduled Change of Command after the ship left Guam. "Throughout the deployment, our Sailors have shown a resiliency and dedication to service that is truly inspiring. This team has completed a job well done."

The ship took a leading-edge piece of weaponry to sea, participated in a milestone display of international diplomacy and won the fight against a new virus in front of the entire world. Theodore Roosevelt's return home marked the completion of a deployment that not only met the mission, but was historic. Sardiello's message to the crew throughout the crisis had become a reality and a signal to the world. "Returning *Theodore* Roosevelt to sea as a symbol of inspiration and hope and an instrument of national power was critically important."

VFA-146 BLUE DIAMONDS RETURN HOME

by LT Michael "Baby Bird" Thorsen. USN

The Blue Diamonds returned home in July from one of the most unique Western Pacific (WESTPAC) deployments in recent memory. The spread of COVID-19 on board CVN 71 created some unprecedented challenges. The aircraft carrier and air wing teams were forced to halt operations for more than two months in the middle of the deployment to control the spread of the disease. The lessons learned provided invaluable information to the entire Navy on how to handle this type of crisis while maintaining a strategic presence around the world.

After more than two months of cold steel, the CVN pulled out of Guam, the catapults fired again, and CVW-11 found itself back on the island of Guam at Andersen AFB doing field carrier landing practice (FCLP) to regain currency for all aircrew as we returned to routine flight operations. VX-23 was instrumental in procuring and arranging for the





delivery of a Mk 14 field Improved Fresnel Lens Optical Landing System to Guam from NAS Patuxent River, Md. Once carrier qualifications were complete, CVW-11 resumed flight operations. This very unusual deployment culminated with several days of dual carrier operations with CVW-17 and USS Nimitz (CVN 68).

Finding the time to appreciate just how unique this deployment was, for sea. Those who tested positive remained in quarantine on the island as they recovered from the virus. After over a month, and with enough crew recovered to go to sea, the ship departed Guam. The Liberty Bells, along with the rest of the air wing, began preparations for a det to Andersen AFB to conduct FCLP and regain flight currency. Careful planning and execution were required to get squadron aircraft flying again and moved to Andersen, but it was nothing the *Liberty Bells* couldn't handle. The evolution was a resounding success as every pilot fulfilled the requirements to return to sea and qualify on board the ship. With the aircraft, aircrew and ship Upon arrival home, the Blue Diamonds bid farewell to six ready room healthy, TR set sail once more. The CVN 71 and air wing team "wrote the book" on how to overcome an infectious disease outbreak on board a naval vessel. It took an incredible amount of patience, fortitude and hard work to get back out on deployment, and the Liberty Bells, along with rest of the ship and air wing team, did an exceptional job. Following the carrier qualification process, Theodore Roosevelt conducted dual carrier operations with Nimitz in the Philippine Sea and then turned east toward home.

CVW-11 held a welcome Fo'c'sle Follies event. VFA-146 earned the Top Hook Award for a fourth straight time! LTs Jamie "PWJ" Schrock, Michael "Baby Bird" Thorsen and Brandon "Tinker" Bell received Top Eleven Ball Flyer honors with 4.0 grade point averages (GPA) and 100 percent boarding rates. CDR Kevin "Tubs" McNatt, also in the Top Eleven, flew an impressive 4.04 GPA and 100 percent boarding rate. Other noteworthy accomplishments included LTs Luciano "SKiMP" Worl receiving his wing landing signal officer qualification and Baby Bird completing his strike fighter weapons and tactics Level IV syllabus. members, making room for six replacements headed our way over the next few months. There is no rest for the weary as the squadron headed to Nevada in August for a refresher Air Wing Fallon detachment (det) and back to sea for a Sustainment Exercise det in October in preparation for our next deployment in early 2021. The Blue Diamonds remain always ready to keep the away game, away.

LIBERTY BELLS INAUGURAL WESTERN PACIFIC DEPLOYMENT

by LT Alex Bledsoe, USN

VAW-115 embarked on board Theodore Roosevelt in January as part of CVW-11 for its inaugural WESTPAC deployment from its new home in the continental United States. Sailing the South China and Philippine Seas as a beacon of freedom and force projection within the Pacific Ocean, the Liberty Bells enjoyed visits to Guam and Vietnam and experienced the local cultures and cuisines associated with each. However, upon returning to sea from their Vietnamese port call, they quickly found themselves heading back to Guam for an unexpected period ashore.

The change in course and accelerated arrival in Guam this time was due to an outbreak of COVID-19 on board the ship. As a substantial number of the crew became infected, TR pulled pierside in Guam, and the

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Navy worked with local officials to find a suitable quarantine location for the crew on both the naval base and around the island. Within a few days, most of the ship and air wing personnel were housed in various hotels, schools and gymnasiums for quarantine. After more than three weeks in isolation, healthy aircrew and Sailors returned to the ship to prepare her

The Liberty Bells returned to NBVC Point Mugu in early July to a changed world adjusting to the pandemic. One week after return, the squadron conducted a modified change-of-command ceremony with virus mitigation measures in place. Squadron personnel said a heartfelt goodbye to their commanding officer, CDR Stephen Yenias, as their executive officer, CDR Brian "Tex" Watt, assumed command. The Liberty Bells also welcomed aboard their new executive officer, CDR Adam "Moonpie" Yates.

VAW-115 executed a welcome post-deployment leave after the ceremony, but upon completion, immediately began preparations for an air wing det to NAS Fallon in preparation for our next deployment. Using lessons learned from their memorable and challenging 2020

deployment, the Liberty Bells will be prepared to answer the nation's call through a busy 2021.







USS Nimitz CAPT Maximilian Clark

CVW-17 **CAPT** Todd Cimicata



CVW-17 TEAM OUICKSAND by LT Rebecca "Fraü" Nortz, USN

very deployment is different, but CVW-17's first cruise on board challenges. As the first air wing scheduled to embark after COVID-19 was declared a worldwide pandemic, CVW-17 and CVN 68 came together as Team Quicksand to build many of the mitigation measures for deploying carrier strike groups from the ground up. USN, MC3 Kyle Merritt

Just three days after completing the Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX), Team Quicksand officially began our deployment on 8 June and immediately steamed west. A brief but busy sojourn in U.S. Seventh Fleet gave us not one, but three opportunities for dual carrier operations in the Philippine and South China Seas as we worked with CVW-11 from USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) and CVW-5 from USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) to ensure freedom of navigation through contested waters.

The team's time in Seventh Fleet also included a pier call in Guam, a logistical trial at a time when the health of the carrier strike group was of paramount concern. Luckily, NavBase Guam was an accommodating host. The pier at Apra Harbor along with Gab Gab Beach were set aside for the Sailors for some much needed rest and relaxation.

Nimitz chopped to U.S. Fifth Fleet on 24 July, taking over from USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) and CVW-3 as the on-call air wing in the Persian Gulf. Team Quicksand is looking forward to getting into the rhythm of Operations Freedom's Sentinel and Resolute Support as an integral part of the Coalition team in the Middle East.



VFA-22 RETURNS TO COMBAT OPERATIONS

by LT Marty Wilson, USN Earlier this year, the Department of Defense imposed various restrictions designed to protect the health of its service members, primarily those in units preparing to or already deployed. As the world continued to adapt to the effects of COVID-19, the VFA-22 Fighting Redcocks finished work ups and began deployment while adapting to rapidly evolving restriction of movement and quarantine protocols to ensure the health and safety of all members of the command. The squadron overcame unprecedented challenges to ensure unit health and combat readiness for its 2020 deployment on board Nimitz and remained laser-focused on the mission of preparing for a high-end fight against peer adversaries. Despite these hurdles, the Redcocks dominated Air Wing Fallon and the COMPTUEX, leading CVW-17 with the highest kill-to-loss ratio achieved in any air wing during the previous four years of training at Fallon. Commanding Officer CDR J.W. "Vespa" Stigi continued to champion the game plan of tight merges and enabling the aggressive initiative of his force, creating an environment that revolves around winning in combat.

As the Mighty Shrikes entered the U.S. Seventh Fleet AOR they conducted dual carrier operations with Theodore Roosevelt off Guam Deployment has been exceptionally dynamic, and the Carrier Strike prior to that carrier making its way back to San Diego. Immediately Group Eleven (CSG-11) team has already engaged in highly visible, after, Nimitz joined Ronald Reagan in the highly contested South China dual carrier operations with Ronald Reagan in the contested waters Sea. Conducting around-the-clock operations, both carriers participated of the South China Sea. We conducted complex, long-range maritime in tactical air, surface and subsurface exercises to maintain warfighting strike operations in the Indian Ocean and gained peak proficiency in the readiness and proficiency, all while reinforcing a free and open Indofoundational mission of embarked carrier air operations. Pacific region.

The Mighty Shrikes then shifted their AOR to U.S. Fifth Fleet in After transitioning to the U.S. Fifth Fleet area of responsibility (AOR), CSG-9 relieved the Battle Axe team on board Eisenhower. VFA-22 the Middle East where they relieved their friends in CVW-3 on board Eisenhower. Hobo jets led the first of many missions to was selected to lead the first flight of CVW-17 aircraft over the beach in support of Operations Freedom's Sentinel and Resolute Support in provide safe passage and freedom of navigation to ships Afghanistan. Showing grit and determination, the Redcock Sailors and transiting the Strait of Hormuz. Team Quicksand has also



chiefs have battled through all of the COVID mitigation measures to provide the best groomed, best looking and most combat capable aircraft on board Nimitz. The Fighting Redcocks will continue to support U.S. and Coalition forces throughout the Middle East and stand ready for any and all operational tasking until their mission is complete.

VFA-94 MIGHTY SHRIKES

by LT William "Sticky" Preston Esq., USN

After defeating COVID-19 at home through a strict premovement quarantine, the Mighty Shrikes departed NAS Lemoore and went aboard *Nimitz*. Upon completion of the CSG-11 COMPTUEX the *Hobos* and the rest of CVW-17 Team Quicksand headed west to begin the first phase of an unprecedented deployment, executing a rare "COMPTUEX-and-Go!" Off the East Coast, you could hear the cheers from CVW-1 and USS Harry Truman (CVN 75) as they were finally approved to return home after the *Nimitz's* COVID-free push west!



flown missions in support of Operation Resolute Support in Afghanistan, countering terrorist activities and providing support to NATO Coalition forces while building the Afghan security force's capability. While flying over Afghanistan, the *Mighty Shrikes* made history by becoming the first F/A-18 squadron to carry the new infrared search-and-track (IRST) centerline store into combat. The debut of the IRST has enhanced the tactical capabilities of the Super Hornet and has already proven its worth and potential through a variety of mission sets.

Hobo Sailors worked tirelessly in hot and humid conditions throughout Asia and the Middle East, keeping their mighty jets fully mission capable and ready for any tasking. With port calls off the table, VFA-94 and the rest of Team Quicksand have remained motivated while keeping a watchful eye on our nation's potential adversaries. As the VFA-94 Sailors maintain the watch, they are thankful for the continued support of families and friends who have been weathering the challenges of COVID-19 on the home front.

In the midst of a pandemic, the Mighty Shrikes have proved we can still remain operationally effective and provide a forward presence around the world. We look forward to sharing the stories from our deployment at Bug Roach in 2021. SHWFOTS!

VAW-116 SUN KINGS

by LT Jeremy Brenner, USN

The VAW-116 Sun Kings attached to CVW-17 are currently deployed on board *Nimitz*. The squadron successfully completed a demanding work-up cycle, including a Strike Fighter Advanced Readiness Program (SFARP), Integrated Air Defense Course (IADC), Tailored Ship's Training Availability (TSTA), group sail, Aviation Maintenance Inspection and Air Wing Fallon. During the Fallon detachment (det), VAW-116 became the first E-2 squadron to complete a new, extended

five-week training program, flying 82 sorties, totaling 240 mishap-free flight hours with a 100 percent sortie completion rate. This culminated in the qualification of four strike lead command and control mission commanders for CVW-17. Before its COMPTUEX on board Nimitz, VAW-116 completed predeployment restriction of movement requirements on base, isolating and separating the squadron into two separate dets. This allowed the squadron to load on board CVN 68 for COMPTUEX and the ensuing deployment 100 percent COVID-free.

During a rigorous and complex COMPTUEX, the Sun Kings led the way by demonstrating sustained, superior performance, resulting in the execution of 94 sorties totaling 356.7 mishap-free flight hours and a 98.9 percent sortie completion rate. Pilots excelled during the work-up cycle line period, resulting in Commanding Officer CDR Lawrence "Nancy" Nance earning overall CVW-17 Top Hook and LTs Ruairidh "Beta Boi" Donaldson, Corey "Juicy" Couture and Aaron "Low-Five" Muscarelli all earning Top Nugget patches.

While transiting westward, the squadron conducted vital airborne command and control during dual carrier operations in the U.S. Seventh Fleet AOR with both CVW-11 on board Theodore Roosevelt and CVW-5 on board Reagan. The Sun Kings assisted in freedom-of-navigation operations in the South China Sea, providing increased situational awareness to the strike groups while operating safely and professionally in a politically sensitive region. In the Bay of Bengal, the squadron participated in exercises with the Indian navy and helped foster and grow operational relationships with an important partner in the region.

Now deployed to the U.S. Fifth Fleet AOR, VAW-116 leads the way in support of Operations Freedom's Sentinel, Resolute Support and Sentinel. The Sun Kings continue to ensure the free flow of commerce, deter aggression, defend American interests and support partners and Allies in the region.





VIKINGS CELEBRATE 50 by LT Casey "TAF" Talbot, USN

T thas been 50 years since VAH-10 redesignated to VAO-129 under the leadership of Commanding Officer CDR J.D. Blackwood on 1 L September 1970. The squadron had the daunting responsibility of shifting platforms and missions while maintaining a focus on increased capability. With the sundown of its A-3 Skywarriors the following year, the focus became the mounting challenge to defeat and disrupt radar guided surface-to-air missiles, a rapidly emerging problem in threat nations. This shift marked the first of a series of rapid and complex evolutions successfully undertaken since that time by a squadron that is no stranger to changing threats and requirements of the powerful and rapidly evolving carrier air wings and expeditionary forces.

With the arrival of the new EA-6B Prowler in 1971 and evolving mission sets, the training syllabus has remained highly dynamic. The introduction of the GPQT-6 Ground Trainer marked the first major milestone in accelerated VAO aircrew training and efficiency. With advanced methods of ground-based instruction came training to employ the new Standard Anti-Radiation missile. From 1970 to 1980, hundreds of aircrew successfully completed the training pipeline and joined air wings around the world while simultaneously adapting to new technologies including the Expanded Capability and Improved Capability (ICAP) software sets.

In March 1977, the necessity for enhanced electronic attack support in the USMC led to the introduction of the Corps' first aircrew and maintenance personnel to the Prowler world. On 26 August 1977, the first USMC electronics countermeasure officer graduated from the syllabus, spawning a relationship between the USN and USMC VAQ teams, eventually leading to VAQ-129 front office Marine Corps leadership in 1992. VAQ-129 still maintains that close working relationship today despite the retirement of the EA-6B *Prowler*.

As the Cold War progressed, VAQ-129 Prowler aircrew continued adjusting tactical and training capabilities. The integrated four-seat 2F119 Weapons Systems Trainer provided a monumental leap in the ability to increase the production and quality of training in a shorter amount of time. It provided full-simulated combat environments and scenarios prior to aircrew introduction to the fleet. Accompanying the release of ICAP II in 1986, the standup of the 15E34A radar site and the fleet release of the AGM-88A High-speed Anti-Radiation Missile represented another leap in training capability and opportunity.

The retirement of the USAF EF-111 Raven brought new but not unique leadership challenges for a squadron that has defined itself through evolution. The sudden addition of five new Prowler squadrons to fill the gap in electronic warfare support required an increase in student production by some 20 percent. As the electronic attack community's

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fleet replacement squadron, VAQ-129 led this growth in the community as aircrew joined these new expeditionary squadrons and other legacy ones to support Operation Allied Force over Kosovo with the new and improved Block 89A Prowler, providing numerous improvements including global positioning satellite/inertial navigation systems capability.

A testament to the ethos of the Viking instructors, the increased demand created by Operations Enduring Freedom and Iragi Freedom required additional qualified aircrew and maintenance personnel, as well as fully mission capable aircraft to join the fight, and VAQ-129 delivered. In 2003, the Vikings earned the coveted CDR Theodore G. Ellyson Award for Aviator Production Excellence for training 89 new fleet replacement aircrew and 48 current fleet aviators while simultaneously answering the needs of the force.

Maintaining the seemingly regular tempo VAQ-129 established, 2008-'09 brought perhaps the most monumental shift in warfare capability, transition demands and training requirements with the introduction of the EA-18G Growler, a hybrid variant of the F/A-18F Super Hornet coupled with the lethal ICAP III electronic warfare suite.

"The transition for VAO-129 from training aircrew in the EA-6B to the EA-18G was a monumental shift in how we prepared students for the new aircraft," said former Vikings Commanding Officer CAPT David "Rooster" Harris. "Training in the EA-6B primarily focused on safe execution during the administrative and carrier landing phases of flight while tactical training was primarily left to the operational squadrons. By contrast, the EA-18G syllabus focuses on the immense tactical training required of Growler aircrew. VAQ-129 leveraged decades of EA-6B electronic warfare culture to ensure that Growler aircrew are more prepared to conduct combat operations day one in the fleet."

Since 2007, more than 4,400 aircrew representing Navy, USAF, USMC, Royal Australian Air Force and British Royal Navy aviators have passed through the Vikings hangar, accumulating over 209,000 flight hours. In 2015, VAQ-129 successfully completed the transition of all VAQ fleet squadrons from the Prowler to the Growler. Inherent in this effort was the same rigorous, meticulous shift in tactics, techniques and procedures the squadron has always fulfilled. Today, VAQ-129 produces combat-ready aircrew, maintainers and aircraft capable of conducting electronic warfare on time and on target in order to fight and win our nation's wars.

The story of VAQ-129 has been one of rising to meet the needs of the nation it supports. To wear a Vikings patch is to be a part of a legacy that has had a critical role in every conflict since the Vietnam War. Congratulations to all the Vikings who contributed to our 50-year legacy of resilience training and supporting the VAQ community, U.S. Armed Forces and Coalition partners. Jam,

Strike, Win!

USN_MC3 Amber Small



HSM-79 IS SPAIN BOUND, VAMANOS MUCHACHOS

by LTJG Michael Madigan, USN

resh off the boat from the squadron's inaugural deployment with CVW-7, the HSM-79 *Griffins* are now busy preparing for their permanent move to NavSta Rota, Spain. The first wave of *Griffins* arrived there in September, with the rest of the squadron joining them in a phased move during the next 18 months. The squadron will support detachments (det) on board ships of the Forward-Deployed Naval Forces (FDNF) based in the region.

"We've handpicked the first group of *Griffins* to set up our operations in Rota," said skipper CDR Josh "JP" Peters. "These are the right people to establish our Griffin culture in Rota and to get the squadron ready for our first guided missile destroyer (DDG) patrols this winter."

The first detachment aptly chose to call itself "El Camino," Spanish for "the way."

"COVID-19 created an abundance of obstacles for our det," said LT Jay "Sniffer" Sloan, "but our maintainers dominated every challenge presented to them. I cannot wait to deploy with this group of Sailors as the first Griffin detachment taking part in FDNF Europe operations."

HSM-79 stood up in San Diego in 2016, worked up with CVW-7 and Carrier Strike Group Twelve in 2018 and deployed aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) in March 2019. Upon the squadron's return to San Diego in January, the *Griffins* transitioned from CVW-7 to an expeditionary model under Helicopter Maritime Strike Wing Atlantic's authority. In addition to preparing to operate aboard DDGs instead of carriers, the Griffins had to navigate a complex overseas movement plan that will take two years to complete and do it all during a pandemic.

"It's exciting, but stressful at the same time," said LT Meg "Magic" Snyder, the Rota det's maintenance officer. "We're all trying to figure out how to move to Spain, but we're also still finishing up our qualifications before we depart, so we are ready to hit the ground running when we get there.'

For their Level III check rides, Snyder and LT Ben "KIMBO" Weaver led an integrated live-fire maritime strike coordination and reconnaissance event with USMC UH-1 Hueys and AH-1Z Vipers from Marine Aircraft Group 39 off the Southern California coast.

"It was a really awesome experience to work with the Marines," said Weaver. "We used our radar and other sensors to get them onto the targets and then got to watch on the FLIR [forward-looking infrared] as they unleashed fury."

HSM-79 continues to break down barriers as it forges ahead with the move to Spain. The second wave will complete the Helicopter Advanced Readiness Program at NAF San Clemente Island this fall before the move commences in early 2021.

"This squadron is really something special," said CDR Peters. "We overcame tremendous adversity during our work-up cycle and deployment. It's built a remarkable core of resiliency into the Griffin culture. And that culture has fueled our continued success during the pandemic. I feel like our Sailors can adapt to and overcome anything, and I couldn't be more proud of this squadron."



VAQ-135 WORLD-FAMOUS BLACK RAVENS

by LTJG Eugene "FNG" Arai, USN hough COVID-19 may try to obstruct our path to deployment readiness, VAQ-135 will always overcome. While multiple largeforce employments (LFE) were canceled earlier in the year due to the pandemic, including Red Flags Nellis and Alaska, the Black Ravens have risen to the occasion and will be ready and able on time.

As the Ravens prepare for deployment to Misawa AB in Northern Japan, our jets are flying multiple sorties daily to become operationally ready to support forces in the U.S. Seventh Fleet area of responsibility.

In July, all Black Ravens were on the edge of our seats waiting to find out whether *Red Flag* Nellis 20-3 was a green light or red. By August, the Black Ravens were safely on site at Nellis AFB in Las Vegas preparing for two weeks of LFEs in the 100-plus degree desert heat.

At Nellis the Black Ravens were greeted with a massive USAF fleet of fighter, bomber, electronic warfare and command and control aircraft, tankers and USMC F-35B Lightning IIs. The EA-18G Growlers from VAO-135 and the VAQ-132 Scorpions were the Navy's representatives for the exercise, tasked with suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD).

LFE missions include offensive counter air/ defensive counter air. combat search and rescue and dynamic targeting. The exercise ended in multiple Blue Force wins and the SEAD leads often came home with the American flag, which meant they were the most outstanding performer of the mission.

With extensive COVID mitigation and hard work from all Black Ravens including aircrew, intelligence and maintenance, Red Flag Nellis 20-3 was an overall mission success with zero COVID incidents and effective SEAD missions.

The Black Ravens are now ready to deploy and electronically suppress enemy forces while protecting all Blue Forces in the Pacific. World Famous!



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VRM-30 TITANS

The months of June and July marked several exciting milestones for both the *Titans* and Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Squadron (VRM) community. After spending 18 months integrating with various USMC Marine Medium Tiltrotor squadrons to receive valuable advanced qualification training, the Titans have partly consolidated as a team in our own hangar to begin honing and refining the squadron's processes and procedures. Titan 30, the squadron's first aircraft, arrived at NAS North Island on 22 June 2020, a milestone immediately

followed by VRM-30's inaugural Maintenance Program Assist (MPA). This established a baseline in the critical journey in achieving Safe-for-Flight Certification scheduled for the week of 8 September. Two weeks after the MPA, we took delivery of the second aircraft, Titan 31. With the delivery of aircraft and the squadron infrastructure moving closer toward completion, things are beginning to feel familiar and a lot like what we are used to in an established squadron. The *Titans* will continue the partnership with the USMC to leverage lessons learned and soon be ready to deliver lethality to the fleet!



VHook '20 A Sign of the Times by Hill Goodspeed

rom calls to "Master Control" in Los Angeles to switch slides or adjust volume, to a cameo by "Maverick" himself, to a reference to the 1970s TV game show "Hollywood Squares" describing the screen layout during the flag panel, VHook '20 definitely had elements not normally seen in Reno. The stirring national anthem brought Tailhookers to their feet in front of computer screens around the country. The informative panels on Naval Air Training and a range of other topics rang familiar notes as Hook went virtual.

In a year in which COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of life, notably the ability of large groups to gather, summer brought the difficult decision to cancel the in-person Tailhook symposium in Reno. Fortunately, if there was a good year for this to occur, it was it was 2020. With Naval Air Training the theme of Hook '20, some options for hosting the symposium virtually quickly became apparent.

Our new president CAPT Eric "Popeye" Doyle and board chairman RADM Don "D.Q." Quinn, USN(Ret) live in Pensacola, along with many panelists. We were able to assemble in the "Cradle of Naval Aviation," and the National Naval Aviation Museum became the broadcast location for multiple events. This included what has become a tradition with veteran Tailhookers donating their Wings of Gold to new officers. The milestone event was celebrated in the inspirational setting of the museum's Blue Angel Atrium. The incoming and outgoing board chairmen were part of the winging ceremony, with ADM Bill "Shortney" Gortney, USN(Ret) presenting wings worn by both him and his father and D.Q. donating wings that he proudly noted were worn at every career stop aside from tours in the Pentagon. The final set was presented to the first rotary-wing pilot winged at Hook. They came from RDML Daniel Fillian, currently serving as Director, Warfare Integration, N9I, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

While many panelists broadcast from Pensacola, others appeared from homes and offices around the country, with Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic RADM John "Oscar" Meier taking the prize for best remote studio by connecting while on leave in the Outer Banks in North Carolina. From the latest word on personnel amid the pandemic, to news from industry and a look ahead to the Air Wing of the Future, the panels were enlightening and informative.

The Naval Air Training panels covered past, present and future with memories of the venerable training carrier USS Lexington (AVT 16) and enduring lessons imparted by flight instructors laying the foundation for the current training pipeline and Project Avenger, which is introducing virtual reality and other technologies into training. This will better prepare Naval Aviators and Naval Flight Officers to hit the ground running when they arrive at the fleet replacement squadrons that are the gateways to the fleet.

While missing the camaraderie of the Bug Roach mixer, the hospitality suites or catching up with an old squadronmate on the convention floor, VHook '20 provided the opportunity to engage online attendees with multimedia presentations. The stirring introductory video set the tone for the entire event, blending historic films with messages from the Secretary of the Navy, Gary Sinise and members of the cast of the upcoming film "TOP GUN: Maverick." The Air Boss and his wife Ellen shared farewell memories as he prepares to end his distinguished Naval Aviation career while comments from Tailhook Educational Foundation scholarship recipients pointed to the

The Hook, Fall 2020





incredible investment in the future that so many members have made with generous donations. A message from Chief of Naval Operations ADM Mike Gilday capped off the two-day event, which was viewed by thousands from locations around the world, a number of them exposed to the Tailhook Association for the first time.

Recordings of the event are available for viewing at www.tailhook.net for those wishing to catch a panel they missed or to relive an event that was certainly a sign of this year's unique times.

By LT Stephen "TWIG" Smith, USN



The "orange and whites" that train the future of Naval Aviation fly formation with a Blue Angels F/A-18 legacy Hornet near NAS Pensacola, 31 Aug '20. An element of the Naval Air Training Command since inception in 1946, the Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron is transitioning to the F/A-18E Super Hornet.

PROWLER ASSOCIATION



For More Details & Membership http://www.ea6bprowler.org/

Mission: The mission of The Prowler Association (PA) is to preserve and promote the legacy, history, and accomplishments of the EA-6B Prowler during its forty-three years of service. We honor those who flew, maintained, built, or supported the Prowler, and their families. We inform the public of the Prowler's contributions to America's military successes. We sponsor patriotic events, hold symposiums and fraternal gatherings, assist historic memorials to naval aviation, and in general foster the memory of the Prowler and do well for our members. We remember and honor deceased Prowlers and assist their families. Most importantly, we foster continued comradeship for members via our professional fraternity.





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"The Death Mist"

By LT. ALAN "FISH" FISCHER

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This faith-centered memoir is a tribute to the commitment and actions exemplified in all the incredible and untold sacrifices endured by the men of Attack Squadron 75. Their combat experiences created an invincible bond among the aircrews that was fortified by their faith and trust in each other. These men and their invincible aircraft were pushed to the brink of death and back multiple times. Their communion in spirit and action linked them together during this combat cruise like no other, and extends to this day. No one outside of this circle (members of the "Club Of The Should Be Dead") can fully understand the depth of this bond.



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IN REVIEW

Backseat View from the Phantom: A Memoir of a Marine Radar Intercept Officer in Vietnam; Col Fleet S. Lentz Jr., USMCR(Ret); McFarland and Company, Inc., N.C., 2020; softcover, 219 pages. \$29.95

This small publisher has recently put out a few interesting books and this new offering is one of the best. Although much has been written about the Vietnam air war, very little has covered the somewhat unique situation that developed after the cease-fire of January 1973 that brought the major fighting to an end and allowed repatriation of most of the long-held American prisoners of war.

A BACKSEAT VIEW from the PHANTOM



FLEET S. LENTZ, Jr., Col USMCR (Ret)

in Vietnam

However, fighting continued in Laos and Cambodia as the communist forces in these adjacent countries tried to consolidate their positions. While American sea and land forces largely withdrew from the area, the USMC kept one squadron each of F-4 Phantom IIs and A-6 Intruders in-country well into the summer of 1973. They operated from the Royal Thai Air Base at Nam Phong, fondly referred to as "The Rose Garden." in wry reference to a popular song whose lead lyric reminded "I beg your pardon, I didn't promise you a rose garden." The lyrics had been adopted as a slogan in a Marine recruiting poster of the era. And that note was certainly true because the base offered little in amenities for the longsuffering Marine aviators and their ground troops.



Aviation and what the Foundation is doing to support the Community. The Foundation thanks its Corporate and Individual Members for their strong and continued support.

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From the moment they arrived, the VMFA-115 Silver Eagles struggled to maintain their big fighters as well as their morale while flying almost daily missions into areas that still promised major enemy defenses. The squadron had been involved in the previous major campaigns from 1965, flying from bases in South Vietnam alongside other services.

Then 1stLt Lentz, a newly minted radar intercept officer (RIO), arrived and quickly began flying what ultimately tallied 131 combat missions. Mainly close air support in nature, these flights proved to be just as dangerous as any in the main war. His superb writing brings the reader into the cockpit.

We meet several characters who take the new RIO on his first combat missions, each with unique callsigns by which the author still remembers them. Most are senior to him and have already logged considerable combat time. He struggles to keep up with them and quickly learns as much as he can so he can become a fully functioning crewmember. As he gains experience and confidence, he finds himself advising pilots as they struggle through missions. One example involves aerial tanking, not an easy part of the overall flight. His pilot is a full colonel and in command of the Marine aircraft group. Although a good bomber, he admits that the difficult exercise of plugging into a tanker's basket is not his strong suit, and he proceeds to prove it.

As the F-4's engines gobble up the remaining fuel and the senior pilot struggles to plug into the tanker's basket, time is quickly running out. The now-experienced RIO behind him shows his value, calms the pilot and leads him to a successful plug-in to a KC-130 Hercules. Safely returning to their base in Thailand, the pilot quickly expresses his profound gratitude in a simple manner that means a lot to the young RIO who flew behind him.

> Lentz also describes the attitude about enemy MiG fighters. Even at the end of the war, USMC crews still hoped they would find and engage the dangerous MiGs that had played such a highly publicized role in the war. Navy and USAF crews had shot down many, but Marine aviators had tallied only three kills, two while on exchange tours in USAF squadrons and only one with a Marine crew in a Marine Phantom.

> Quite a few Vietnam veterans are now writing their stories, and this new book is one of the best I have seen that focuses on a period of the war about which many people know little.

CDR Peter B. Mersky, USN(Ret)



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Scouting Support

7 ou will notice a nice addition to the property the next time you visit the Tailhook Association (THA) office in San Diego. Every year the Boy Scouts of America accumulate more than three million hours of Eagle Service Projects in communities around the United States. One of those projects is our new flagpole.

The Eagle projects are individual studies in task, cash and personnel management. The requirements for the Scout include fundraising to cover the costs, planning and scheduling the event and recruiting other Scouts and volunteers to assist.

Connor Ferguson (Naval Academy hopeful) has now performed all the necessary tasks to advance to the coveted rank of Eagle. The project was planned and conducted by Scouts and volunteers under Connor's supervision and the watchful eye of his father, THA stalwart CAPT Brian "Ferg" Ferguson, USN(Ret) with some additional technical assistance from CAPT Greg "Chaser" Keithley, USN(Ret). The team completed the project on 28 August, on time and under budget, so much so that the Tailhook Educational Foundation received a check for \$1,000 in residual funds from Boy Scout Troop 664 in San Diego.

Bravo Zulu to Connor and the rest of the Scouts for a job well done.

Right: The Ferguson family presented a donation to the Tailhook Educational Foundation on behalf of Scout Troop 664 on 28 August. Eagle Scouts Evan and Cole, CAPT Brian and Eagle candidate Connor Ferguson with the newly installed flagpole.



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.

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What is It? by Mark Aldrich

The summer mystery plane was easier than I expected. We had quite a few entries from the spotter's corps, and nearly all were right on the money. Thanks to all of you for playing the game with us. If you think you have a suitable entry to include in a future issue, please let us know.

The Caudron Simoun was a 1930s French four-seat touring monoplane. The type was used as a mail plane, military courier and for recordsetting long-range flights. More than 500 were built in several different configurations. In 1936 a single aircraft was procured for the U.S. Naval Air Attaché in Paris and given Bureau Number 0725. As war loomed, the aircraft was impressed into French military service.



The unique Caudron Simoun operated by the Navy from Villacoublay outside Paris, France from 1936 to 1939

Another Simoun was ordered in July 1935 and delivered to author and pilot Antoine de Saint-Exupéry the following September. At the end of December he took off from Paris with navigator André Prévo bound for Saigon, French Indochina (present day Vietnam), in an attempt to establish a new speed record. After 19 hours and 38 minutes of flight, while cruising by night over the Arabian Desert, the crew encountered poor weather conditions and was forced down, writing the aircraft off. Both occupants were uninjured, but waited for four days without water or food before being rescued.

Saint Exupéry wrote about the experience in Wind, Sand and Stars, published in 1939. It was the basis for his famous 1943 novella The Little Prince.

Our staff randomly selected a reader with the correct answer for this issue. Congratulations to George Cully of Sequim, Wash.

The fall 2020 mystery airplane comes from an earlier time and may present a little more of a challenge. Be sure to include the manufacturer and correct designation of the aircraft at the time the photo was taken. There will be extra points given for the date and location of the photo.

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.

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ON DECK

The Green Flash

by CDR Jack "Farva" Curtis, USN(Ret)

was a first grade kid living on board NAS Point Mugu in the summer of 1984. VX-9 was stationed there at the time, and it was the first time L I saw Navy jets. I never got an opportunity to interact with any of the pilots, but I decided that they had to be pretty awesome and I was going to be one of them. The innocent naiveté of a 7-year-old obscured the reality that getting to be one of them would be the longest of long shots.

I managed to do well enough in high school to attend college on a Navy ROTC scholarship. And despite my best efforts, I managed to graduate from one of the nation's top party schools in four years. Through stubbornness and more grace and good luck than one person should ever receive, I found myself in a jet trying to land on a ship for the first time in May 2002. If I had never had a chance to do anything more in the Navy, I would have been content.

I'll fast-forward this trip down memory lane to the summer of 2008. By then I was an instructor LSO at the EA-6B fleet replacement squadron. After we'd done all the bouncing we could at home, we'd pack up and head down to San Diego.

One day we wrapped up early and got out to the beach in the afternoon. One of my friends and fellow instructors, with the dubious callsign "Detox," told me about a bar he wanted to hit. The Lahaina Beach House was widely accepted to be one of the best places in town to watch a sunset. We found a table on the deck, ordered a bucket of beers and waited. Detox asked if I'd ever seen the green flash. I had no idea what he was talking about. He told me it is something that occurs at sunset as the sun dips below the horizon and the light is dispersed through the earth's atmosphere like a prism.

Let's fast-forward again—to 1 August 2020. I'd been doing the carrier aviation thing for a little more than 20 years. I was privileged to be in command of the VAQ-130 Zappers with about a week to go before bringing my squadron home from cruise on board USS Dwight D. *Eisenhower* (CVN 69). One of the elements of the job I enjoyed most was mentoring the youngest aviators. Whether related to the actual flying USN, PH2 Seth C. Peterson

or some of the squishier leadership stuff, I tried my best to pass on to them the things I'd learned from my limited successes and countless failures. I shared stories and painfully learned lessons. I did it because this job meant so much to me it would have been irresponsible and selfish not to. Amusingly, these young aviators often looked at me with the same incredulous look I gave Detox when he explained the green flash. It's a look that suggests mild interest with a healthy dose of skepticism.

That evening I went topside for a walk alone to get some fresh air and think. As I was strolling across the flight deck I saw one of our young Sailors working under one of our EA-18G Growlers. I crouched down and struck up a conversation with him. We chatted a bit about his plans for post-deployment leave and then he pointed out how pretty the sunset was about to be. We crawled out from under the jet and walked over to the deck edge. I asked him if he'd ever seen the green flash. He gave me that skeptical look; the one I gave Detox back in 2008, and the same one the junior pilots gave me when they found themselves trapped in another episode of "Old Man Story Hour." I explained to him as much of the science behind it as I could remember. Then it happened. We both stood quietly with only the sound of the passing ocean and the brilliance of the now fading flash. He turned to me and said, "Skipper, that's got to be one of the coolest things I've ever seen. Thank you.'

I was up on the flight deck that evening for a walk because I thought I needed to be alone for a little bit. Earlier that day I landed a jet on a ship for the last time. It's the only thing I ever wanted to do, and I got to do it for a long time, but I'll never do it again. In October I turned over command of the squadron and retired from the Navy. I flew some more before that, but never again at sea. The finality of the day brought a lot of emotions I probably should have been more prepared for. The last 20 years feel like they've gone by in the blink of an eye — in the green flash of a sunset. I thought a quiet stroll alone would be helpful. Instead I ended up with Petty Officer Lorenzo — and our few minutes alone together were exactly what I didn't know I needed.



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VT-2 Doerbirds T-6B Texan II



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T-6B Texan II

VT-6 Shooters

T-6B Texan II





Training Air Wing Five NAS Whiting Field



HT-8 Eightballers TH-57 Sea Ranger



Training Air Wing Six NAS Pensacola



VT-4 Warbucks Multi Crew Simulator



HT-18 Vigilant Eagles TH-57 Sea Ranger



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VT-10 Wildcats T-6A Texan II



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