WINGS OF GOLD

Fall 2025



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Features

Flag Spotlight – NAWCAD *Rear Admiral Todd Evans, USN*....6
Commodore's Corner *NTWL Captain Daniel Kitts, USN*....8
Gray Flag 25 *Kimberly Brown NAWCWD PAO*....11
HSC-14: Northern Edge 2025 *PO2 Nathaly Cruz, CVN-72*....12
HSC-25 Det 6: SAR Mission *PO2 Amy Mullins, USS America*....13
USCG HITRON 1000th Interdiction *USCG Atlantic Area*....14
Joint Force Training at NAWCAD *NAWCAD Public Affairs*....15
NASA 2025 Astronaut Candidates *Josh Valcarcel, NASA*....16
11th Annual Point Mugu Surf Contest *LTJG Drew Verbis, NBVC*....17
First Four T-54A METS Program Graduates *LTJG Melvin Fatimehin, CNATRA*....18
National Museum of Naval Aviation Vietnam POW Exhibit *LT (Fmr) Rick Risher*....19
Tailhook Association Symposium *from Official Press Releases*....20
Naval Helicopter Association Event *CAPT Mark "Wizard" Denari, USN (Ret)*....22
VR-62 "Nomads" 40th Anniversary Celebration *AWFCS Michael Wendelin, USN (Ret)*....23
NAS Lemoore Search and Rescue: Part 1 *Phil Amrhein*....25
CNATRA Instructor Pilot of the Year *Morgan Galvin, CNATRA PAO*....26
MAG-24 Supports NJROTC Training *2ndLt Joseph Adcock, USMC 1st MAW*....27
VX-30 Enables First Army Overseas *Typhon* Launch *Michael Smith, NAWCWD*....28
VX-31 Bids Farewell to the *Harrier* *Michael Smith, NAWCWD*....29
Photo Highlights *VAW-117, VP-4*....30
Purdue University Masters for USNTPS Graduates *NAWCAD Public Affairs*....31
ACES Act Enabled *Vince "Aztec" Alcazar.*....33
The Patuxent River Partnership Panels *Sam "Messy" Messer*....34

Departments

From the President *Rear Admiral David L. Philman, USN (Ret)*....4
Scholarship Awards Announcement *Melissa Garrison, MOWSF*....32
Squadron News....36
ANA Log Book....58
Ownership Statement....59
ANA Squadron Contacts....60
ANA Membership Application....62

From the President

Rear Admiral David L. Philman, USN (Retired)



Dear Members of the Association of Naval Aviation,

By the time you read this piece, even south Texas will have cooled down from the relentless summer time heat. I trust that everyone has your fall and winter plans ready to go!

Let me express how proud I am of the efforts of our editor, Dave "Face" Kennedy and Associate Editor, Mackenzie, in getting our 50th Anniversary edition of *Wings of Gold* out. Bravo Zulu to him as well as the myriad of contributors from active duty squadron PAOs, and ANA squadrons alike.

We know that Naval Aviation is still on the front lines of world events, and still needs our support! It is important that we continue to be the voice of all of Naval Aviation and use our platform to continue to educate the general public and senior decision makers in Washington and Industry.

Good news, however: This issue of *Wings of Gold* highlights our active local ANA Squadrons in Squadron News, with the most submissions to *Wings of Gold* in recent history – please keep up the great work and community outreach! I call your attention to an article highlighting the history of the formation of the ANA Squadron in Huntsville AL, led by James "Cooter" Carver. Thanks for taking the lead, Cooter!!

We're looking to encourage renewed activity in local Squadrons, including increased outreach to Active Duty Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard units. Please let me know if there is anything that National can do to assist in any local outreach efforts. We don't have a huge budget but we want to be helpful in any way possible. And any inputs would be meaningful as we build our budget for next year.

More good News: Continuing, active ANA support of our fellow service organizations:

In July, we participated in the special NHA Awards Ceremony held in July onboard USS Midway, in San Diego, CA. This was a great opportunity to present annual CNAF ANA-sponsored awards for outstanding performance. Local San Diego-area ANA Theodore Ellyson Squadron representatives CAPT Mark "Wizard" Denari USN (Ret) and CAPT Scott Krambeck, USN (Ret) were onboard and took part in the ceremony, during an the event that included cocktails and a buffet dinner on Midway's flight deck.

And in August, our sponsorship of a table at Tailhook '25 in Reno, NV, where ANA had a record number of new memberships signups, with inquiries regarding new squadron standups. We had a great location on the main floor where our group displayed the impressive 50th Anniversary Commemorative edition of *Wings of Gold* magazine. Additionally, our Chairman, Lobster Fitzgerald and I had the opportunity to help in the presentation of CNAF Awards, also sponsored by ANA.

Of interest is the new series "Top Guns – the New Generation" on television, focusing on advanced jet training. It is a National Geographic docu-series showing on Tuesday nights. It follows a group of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps student pilots during the final, intense phase of their elite Strike Fighter training. The six-part series gives viewers unprecedented access to the highly demanding training program, with the ultimate goal of earning their coveted Wings of Gold.

I'll close out by saying we're still actively looking for a relief for Secretary / Treasurer Betsy Phillips, Honorary Naval Aviator #37, who is looking to retire after over ten years of outstanding service with ANA.

Finally, as we close out our 50th Anniversary Year, we look forward to the next 50!

Cheers!
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From the archives: "Salty Dogs" VX-23 F/A-18D Hornet releases MK-83 1000-pound bombs during initial ATFLIR adjacent stores release tests over the Atlantic Test Range (U.S. Navy photo by Vernon Pugh)

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Mission
The mission of ANA is to serve as the principal association dedicated to expanding advocacy for Naval Aviation and to educate and encourage an interest among the general public as to the importance of Naval Aviation in the defense of the United States and its allies. ANA utilizes publications, symposia, speeches and discussions with various interest groups to execute this mission. It also seeks to foster the strong pride, esprit and fraternal bonds which exist among those associated with Naval Aviation.
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Flag Spotlight

NAWCAD: Testing for the Fight, Delivering for the Fleet

submitted by Rear Admiral Todd Evans, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division Commander



Aerial shot of Naval Air Station Patuxent River, home of Headquarters, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (U.S. Navy photo)

At the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD), our purpose is clear: to ensure that you — our Naval Aviators — have the tools and technology you need to fight, win, and return home safely. We are here to solve problems and deliver capabilities to keep you mission-ready.

With more than 300 labs across Maryland, New Jersey, and Florida, we stand with you. We test, evaluate, research, develop, and sustain every aircraft and subsystem flown in the Fleet, and we are constantly innovating. Our developmental test squadrons, headquartered at NAS Patuxent River, Maryland, operate across 50,000 square miles of Atlantic airspace to validate and refine the systems you rely on with your lives.

Flight testing is where it all comes together — and where delivering for the Fleet starts. These efforts are built on work that has come before: designing, prototyping, integrating, and manufacturing solutions tailored to your needs. From advancing MQ-9 *Reaper* capabilities with next-generation payloads and integrating advanced sensors on F/A-18 *Super Hornets*, to fielding swarm UAV mission-planning tools, improving aircrew gear like harness fittings and Blue Angel visors, and 3D-printing hard-to-find maintenance parts, we share your commitment to the mission. First and foremost, it's about you, the operator.

AT THE CONTROLS: REAR ADMIRAL TODD EVANS

As a Colorado native and USNTPS Class 119 graduate, I built developmental test experience at NAWCAD's rotary test squadron, Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 21 (HX-21). Over my career, I've had the privilege to command at many levels — from the "Vanguard" of HM-14 to the H-60 Multi-Mission Helicopter Program (PMA-299) — and led operational missions around the world. My assignments have crossed air and sea domains, including command of Naval Sea Systems Command's 10 Warfare Centers, which has given me a solid perspective on naval warfare and how to best serve you.

NAWCAD is your partner. When you face challenges with your aircraft, subsystems, or gear, we're here to solve them fast, decisively, and together. When a crew launches with confidence because of something we designed, tested, repaired, or delivered, we've done our job. We win when the Fleet wins. That's how we keep our edge, keep you in the fight, and ensure Naval Aviation remains the most dominant force in the skies today and tomorrow.

FROM THE LAB TO THE FLIGHT LINE

Our mission comes to life each day through our five developmental test squadrons that make up Naval Test Wing Atlantic — the Navy and Marine Corps' proving ground for the aircraft, systems, and capabilities that keep



you combat-ready. These squadrons are where concepts become reality, and where the work of our thousands of civilian scientists, engineers, maintainers, and aircrew is proven in the air.

At our U.S. Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS), we don't just train test professionals — we forge leaders who will shape the future of naval aviation. If you have the skill, drive, and vision to push the limits of what's possible in the cockpit, USNTPS is your next challenge. Our graduates ensure every system, aircraft, and piece of gear is ready for the fight.

For those ready to take the next step, the path from the Fleet to USNTPS to our Test Squadrons is where you can make your mark on the future of Naval Aviation. In the next section, our NTWL Commodore will address how these squadrons execute that mission and deliver results.



Anechoic chamber at the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division, Naval Air Station Patuxent River (U.S. Navy photo)

Commodore's Corner

Naval Test Wing Atlantic

Forging the Fleet's Decisive Edge

submitted by Captain Daniel Kitts, Commodore, Naval Test Wing Atlantic

As I take command of Naval Test Wing Atlantic (NTWL), our mission is unchanged: we relentlessly champion our warfighters' needs by delivering premier, innovative test, evaluation, and experimentation expertise.

Mission success hinges on direct alignment with the Naval Air Systems Command's critical priorities. This means rapidly closing warfighter gaps and meeting the moment to deliver decisive advantage the Fleet needs now, with constant assessment ensuring we remain on target.

Looking ahead, NTWL's testers will continue to be brilliant at the basics, while pushing the boundaries of flight test, experimentation, and demonstration. To that end, we will capitalize on Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division's extensive facilities – labs, chambers, and simulations – to deliver the most effective live, virtual, and constructive flight test capabilities.



VX-23 EA-18G Growler conducts flight test operations onboard Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC) Point Mugu (U.S. Navy photo by LTJG Drew Verbis)

NTWL has been at the forefront of Naval Aviation development for decades, serving as the central hub for testing and innovation. Located onboard Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River in Maryland, NTWL is comprised of four Air Test and Evaluation Squadrons – VX-20, HX-21, VX-23, and UX-24, as well as the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS). Our military, civilian, and contract partners represent the aerospace industry's best and brightest, driving the future of Naval Aviation. I'm honored to lead this elite organization. Let me introduce you to the exceptional teams that make it so formidable…



HX-21 "Blackjacks" aircraft overfly Patuxent River (U.S. Navy photo)

U.S. NAVAL TEST PILOT SCHOOL

For many military testers, the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS) is where it all starts. With Class 166 returning to the Fleet, USNTPS demonstrates its ongoing contribution to producing elite testers for the U.S. military and allied forces worldwide. USNTPS trains two classes annually through a rigorous 11-month curriculum focused on design, risk management, execution, and communication in aircraft and systems testing for combat. This training, conducted across a diverse fleet of aircraft including *Aero-M*, C-12 *Huron*, C-26A *Metroliner*, F/A-18F *Super Hornet*, NU-1B *Otter*, OH-58C *Kiowa*, T-6B *Texan II*, T-38C *Talon*, U-6A *Beaver*, UH-60 *Blackhawk*, UH-72A *Lakota*, X-8M, and X-26A *Frigate* aircraft instills the principle of getting "comfortable being uncomfortable," and prepares graduates to excel as developmental test professionals at future test squadrons. USNTPS trains more flight test pros each year than all other national and international schools combined. The program's caliber is underscored by the fact that nearly 100 USNTPS alumni have become NASA Astronauts.

VX-20 "FORCE"

The "Force" at VX-20 executes developmental ground and flight test in support of a wide range of platforms including the E-2D *Advanced Hawkeye*, P-8A *Poseidon*, AT-6 *Wolverine*, MQ-4C *Triton*, KC-130T/J *Hercules*, E-6B *Mercury*, C-38 *Courier*, UC-12B *Huron*, T-6A/B *Texan II*, EP-3E *Aries*, P-3C *Orion*, RQ-4 *Global Hawk*, C-27 *Spartan*, and future E-130J. The squadron is responsible for test and evaluation in all phases of weapons system life cycle, aircraft carrier suitability testing, navigation, aerial refueling, strategic airborne communications, airborne surveillance and intelligence collection, airborne early warning systems, carrier onboard delivery, and advanced training aircraft missions.

HX-21 "BLACKJACKS"

The "Blackjacks" at HX-21 execute developmental ground and flight test in support of rotary-wing and tilt-rotor aircraft and their associated airborne systems including the MV-22B *Osprey*, UH-1Y *Venom*, AH-1Z *Viper*, CH-53K *King Stallion*, CH-53E *Super Stallion*, MH-53E *Sea Dragon*, NVH-3A/VH-3D *Sea King*, NSH-60F/VH-60N *Whitehawk*, VH-92A, MH-60R *Seahawk*, MH-60S *Knighthawk*, and TH-57C *Sea Ranger*.

VX-23 "SALTY DOGS"

I launched my own test career with the VX-23 "Salty Dogs", NTWL's largest test squadron.

The squadron executes developmental ground and flight test of fixed-wing tactical aircraft including the F/A-18A-D *Hornet*, F/A-18E/F *Super Hornet*, EA-18G *Growler*, T-45A/C *Goshawk*, F-35B/C *Lighting II*, and future MQ-25 *Stingray*. The squadron's primary areas of support are the test and evaluation of flying qualities and performance, shipboard suitability, propulsion systems, tactical aircraft mission systems, ordnance compatibility and ballistics, flight simulation fidelity, and flight control software.

UX-24 "GHOST WOLVES"

UX-24 is the Navy's only test squadron dedicated to research, ground and flight test of all Navy and Marine Corps tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems encompassing fixed- and rotary-wing autonomous, semi-autonomous, and remotely piloted aircraft including the MQ-9 *Reaper*, RQ-20 *Puma*, RQ-21 *Blackjack*, RQ-26 *Aerostar*, and many commercial off-the-shelf UASs. The "Ghost Wolves" provide operators, unmanned aircraft assets, maintenance, operation and safety oversight, and facility support for Groups 1-4 UAS, and other warfighter, agency, and academia needs.

These are your partners at Naval Test Wing Atlantic building the future of Naval Aviation.

A Silver Spring, Maryland native, Captain Daniel "Tonto" Kitts graduated with distinction from the U.S. Naval Academy in 2001 with a Bachelor's degree in Aerospace Engineering and earned his Naval Aviator wings in 2003. After F/A-18C Super Hornet training with Strike Fighter Squadron 106 (VFA-106), he deployed to the Arabian Gulf aboard USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75) with VFA-37 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. A Class 133 graduate of USNTPS, CAPT Kitts served as a Developmental Test Pilot with VX-23 at NAS Patuxent River, followed by assignments with Carrier Air Wing 5 and VFA-85. He commanded VFA-147, leading the Navy's first operational squadron transition from the F/A-18E to the F-35C. He most recently returned to VX-23 in August 2021 as Chief Test Pilot, and became Commanding Officer in June 2022. Before assuming command of NTWL, CAPT Kitts served as the team lead for System of Systems Analysis, Modeling, and Integration within the Mission Integration and Special Programs Office.

Gray Flag 25
Testing Tomorrow's Warfare Systems

story by Kimberly Brown, Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division (NAWCWD)

More than 2,800 U.S. and Allied military personnel converged on a 36,000-square-mile test range off the California coast Sept. 5-19 to evaluate tomorrow's weapons and systems when integrated forces fight as one.

Gray Flag, an annual large-force test event hosted by Naval Test Wing Pacific and Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 9 (VX-9) at Naval Base Ventura County, Point Mugu, combines Developmental Test, Operational Test, and Tactics Development to evaluate advanced capabilities in a joint and multi-domain environment.

"Gray Flag is about sharpening the edge of our warfighting capabilities," said Captain David Halpern, Commodore, Naval Test Wing Pacific. "By testing advanced systems and tactics in realistic combat scenarios, we ensure the Joint Force is ready to dominate in future conflicts."

This year's event brought together U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, Army, and Air Force units as well as Allied partners from Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The intensive testing featured nearly 100 aircraft, spanning



A Sailor cleans the canopy of a VX-9 "Vampires" F-35C during pre-flight checks at Point Mugu, CA during Gray Flag, Sept 9 (U.S. Navy photo by Dana Rene White)

35 different types flew more than 500 sorties across two weeks, generating critical data on how next-generation military systems perform when multiple services and nations fight as one force. Surface and unmanned assets, as well as dozens of ground-based systems, rounded out the multi-domain effort.

The Point Mugu Sea Range, a 36,000-square-mile instrumented area of sea and airspace operated by Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, offers an ideal environment for maritime testing. The Range's infrastructure and experience with Live, Virtual and Constructive (LVC) operations enables participants to simulate and evaluate complex warfighting scenarios in an operationally relevant environment at lower risk and reduced costs.

"Gray Flag is where we push boundaries, challenge assumptions, and develop solutions that directly enhance lethality and survivability," CAPT Halpern said. "The lessons we learn here will shape how we fight tomorrow." The inclusion of Allied forces reinforced the Navy's approach to warfighting as a coalition effort, at home and on the front lines.

"Our nation's success in future conflicts depends on how well we integrate and operate alongside our Allies and partners," said Rear Admiral Keith Hash, Commander Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division and Naval Air Systems Command Chief of Test. "Gray Flag gives us the ability to test advanced capabilities in a joint environment and rapidly deliver credible solutions to the Fleet."

Spotlight on Squadrons

HSC-14: Northern Edge 2025

"Chargers" Demonstrate Advanced SAR Capabilities

story by Petty Officer 2nd Class Nathaly Cruz, USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72)

During the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command-led joint exercise Northern Edge 2025 (NE25), crews from the Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 14 (HSC-14) "Chargers", deployed aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72), operating out of Dutch Harbor, Alaska, from Aug 17-22.

HSC-14 staged MH-60S *Seahawk* aircraft on land to provide extended SAR coverage in support of maritime strike scenarios over the Gulf of Alaska, enabling the aircrew and pilots to practice skills in environments and conditions far from their usual operating area in southern California. "With the extreme distance, we realized months ago that it was going to be necessary to have Search and Rescue coverage well outside what HSC-14 could provide from the aircraft carrier," said CDR Robin Dirickson, Commanding Officer of HSC-14. "We identified a few locations where we'd be able to forward stage our helicopters to ensure that in the event anything happened to any of the fixed-wing aircraft, our helicopters were properly positioned to make sure they got out of the water quickly."



Sailors of the HSC-14 "Chargers" prepare to transport a simulated casualty during Exercise Northern Edge 2025 (U.S. Navy photo by PO1 Jesse Monford)

During Northern Edge 2025, HSC-14 collaborated closely with the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Coast Guard, and Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center personnel recovery experts to coordinate SAR coverage throughout the Aleutian Island Chain. This ensured smooth integration across commands and enabled HSC-14 to streamline logistics and adapt to Alaska's unique operational challenges, including extreme weather and limited infrastructure.

A simulated medical emergency demonstrated how the Joint Force could execute a full rescue and medical evacuation sequence. Crew members from HSC-14 simulated recovering and transferring a patient to a CMV-22B *Osprey*, which simultaneously refueled the HSC-14 helicopters, validating new tactics, techniques, and procedures.

"I am unbelievably proud of our maintenance folks," said CDR Dirickson. "We sent more than 20 personnel, and the amount of work it took to have five mission capable aircraft up for a week is incredible."

Northern Edge 2025, led by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, provided an opportunity for joint interoperability and multi-domain operations designed to offer high-end, realistic war-fighter training and enhance the combat readiness of participating forces.

HSC-25 Det 6: Search and Rescue Mission

story by Petty Officer 2nd Class Amy Mullins, USS America (LHA-6)



MH-60S Seahawk from HSC-25 Det 6 prepares to land on USS America (LHA-6) while conducting flight operations in the Coral Sea, July 1 (U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Sam McNeely)

Embarked aboard the forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA-6), Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25 Detachment 6 (HSC-25 Det 6) trains hard to carry out one of the Navy's most demanding and essential missions: Search and Rescue (SAR). Whether someone is lost at sea, injured on land, or caught in a life-threatening situation, HSC-25 Det 6 is trained and ready to respond at a moment's notice.

Aircrew assigned to HSC-25 Det 6 regularly conduct mock recovery missions to prepare for real emergencies. These drills can involve rescuing a swimmer lost at sea, recovering someone who's fallen overboard, or locating a missing hiker. But training isn't just about practicing known scenarios—it's about preparing for the unexpected.

"A rescue swimmer is expected to know the aircraft systems to help locate a survivor and set up the cabin for rescue," said Naval Aircrewman (Helicopter) 2nd Class Gabriel Andaya, Det 6 Operations Lead Petty Officer. "Once on scene, we assess the situation—are they entangled? Do they have flotation? Are they conscious or unconscious? Everything changes based on the survivor's condition."

While training is essential, the real impact of HSC-25's mission comes into focus during live rescues.

Every successful mission depends on more than just the crew in the air. The MH-60S *Seahawk*, also known as the *Knighthawk* is a complex aircraft requiring constant care. The maintenance crew performs daily inspections and emergency repairs to ensure it is always mission-ready.

Since its formation in 1984, HSC-25 has launched over 2,445 missions, resulting in 762 medical evacuations and 475 lives saved from the waters and jungles across the Pacific Island chains. HSC-25 remains ready to protect lives—anywhere, anytime, under any conditions.

HSC-25 is the Navy's only forward-deployed MH-60S Expeditionary Squadron, homebased at Anderson AFB, Guam, flying missions across the U.S. 7th Fleet AOR. The HSC-25 "Island Knights" also support a wide range of missions beyond SAR, including Helicopter Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS), Maritime Interdiction, Non-Traditional Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (NTISR), Vertical Replenishment (VERTREP), and Close Air Support (CAS), using Hellfire missiles, rockets, and crew-served weapons.

U.S. Coast Guard HITRON 1,000th Interdiction

from U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area



Group photo of USCG Tactical Law Enforcement Team – South, CGC Midgett helicopter tie-down crew, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle personnel underway in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Aug. 28, 2025 (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

The U.S. Coast Guard's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) achieved a significant milestone in its counter-drug mission, completing its 1,000th interdiction of suspected narco-trafficking vessels in August.

Since October 1, 2024, HITRON has interdicted $3.3 billion in illicit narcotics destined for the United States via maritime routes, a three-fold increase over its historic annual average of $1 billion.

"HITRON embodies the Coast Guard's spirit of innovation and adaptability," said Vice Admiral Nathan Moore, Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area. "From its humble beginnings as a prototype program, it has evolved into a vital force in our counter-narcotics efforts. This milestone is a powerful reminder of the strategic value of this specialized unit in addressing the evolving complex maritime security challenges."

On Aug 25, a HITRON aviation detachment deployed aboard Coast Guard Cutter *Midgett* (WMSL-757) observed a suspected narco-trafficking vessel approximately 372 nautical miles southwest of Acapulco, Mexico in the early evening. The helicopter directed the vessel to heave to over the radio and with warning shots. When the vessel failed to comply, the crew used precision rifle fire from the helicopter to disable the vessel's engine, in accordance with airborne use of force policy. A Coast Guard law enforcement boarding team from CGC *Midgett* seized more than 3,600 pounds of suspected cocaine that was found aboard and jettisoned in the waters around the vessel, estimated to have a street value of $49 million.

HITRON is based in Jacksonville, Florida and is a component of U.S. Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command. It was founded in 1999 as a classified prototype program to test the ability of Coast Guard aircraft to employ precision fire to disable narcotics smuggling vessels. With impressive early results, this team grew from the initial ten personnel to its current size of over 200 Active Duty, Reservists, and civilian members, including an exchange pilot from the United Kingdom's Royal Navy. Since its founding, HITRON has interdicted $33.2 billion in illicit drugs during operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, and over the past 26 years has averaged one interdiction every nine days.

Through *Operation Pacific Viper*, the Coast Guard is accelerating counter-drug operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, where significant transport of illicit narcotics continues from South America. In coordination with international and interagency partners, the Coast Guard is surging additional assets—cutters, aircraft and tactical teams—to interdict, seize and disrupt transshipments of cocaine and other bulk illicit drugs into the United States.

Visit *GoCoastGuard.com* to learn about active duty and reserve, officer and enlisted opportunities in the U.S. Coast Guard. Information on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy can be found at *https://uscga.edu*.

Joint Force Training at NAWCAD

submitted by NAWCAD Public Affairs

For the first time, U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Air Force pilots trained as a joint fighting force in the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) Joint Simulation Environment (JSE) at NAS Patuxent River, MD, March 24-27.

The training event brought eight U.S. Marine Corps F-35 *Lightning IIs* to train alongside four U.S. Air Force F-22 *Raptors* in the DOD's most advanced digital test and training range.

"This milestone is a game-changer that ushers in a new era of interoperability for aviation's combat community and served as a pivotal exercise getting NAWCAD ready to make this joint training standard for Navy and Air Force fighters starting this spring," said NAWCAD Commander Rear Admiral John Dougherty IV.

During the event, F-35B and F-35C pilots from Marine Fighter Attack Squadrons VMFA-122, VMFA-225, and VMFA-311 trained with U.S. Air Force operational and flight test pilots. Over two days, F-35 and F-22 pilots practiced Fifth-generation fighting together in 17 simulated combat missions against advanced enemy threats - a capability only available at JSE. After each mission, the pilots reviewed their performance using cockpit video and audio recordings.

"The cross talk [while training in the JSE] is unparalleled in terms of being able to talk tactics [and] actually get in the same room with people," said F-22 pilot Captain Brett Myer, USAF. "It helps iron out a lot of the small details that really matter when it comes down to it."



A pilot trains at the NAWCAD, NAS Patuxent River, MD Joint Simulation Environment (JSE) (U.S. Navy photo by Terri Thomas)

Real world training on open-air ranges at this scale is expensive, difficult to coordinate, and lacks a realistic threat environment. The JSE solves this problem by providing defense aviation a secure simulated range that puts pilots in threat environments not replicable in real life.

"At the end of the day, it's going to be the people that win our nation's wars," said VMFA-225 pilot Major Patrick Kaufer, USMC. "Having those person-to-person connections between the Air Force, the Navy and the Marine Corps [in the JSE] is the most important part and biggest objective that we're able to achieve."

Developed by NAWCAD engineers and industry partners, the JSE is a digital training and test facility that features realistic domed simulators with actual defense hardware, software, and adversary aircraft. The immersive environment enables pilots to practice complex combat scenarios and receive instant feedback, accelerating the learning process and honing their skills. Tactical groups training in the JSE fly more sorties in one week than they fly over a year on open-air ranges.

NAWCAD's JSE is formally integrated into the Navy's Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor Program - commonly known as TOPGUN - and efforts are underway to incorporate JSE across additional warfighter programs.

NAWCAD will expand JSE's capabilities with the addition of a highly realistic E-2D *Advanced Hawkeye* this year, and the F/A-18 *Super Hornet* and EA-18G *Growler* in 2026.

NASA 2025
Class of Astronaut Candidates

from the official NASA press release by Josh Valcarcel



Newly-selected Astronaut candidates at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston: U.S. Army CW3 Ben Bailey, USAF Maj. Cameron Jones, Katherine Spies, Anna Menon, U.S. Navy LCDR Erin Overcash, USAF Maj. Adam Fuhrmann, Dr. Lauren Edgar, Yuri Kubo, Rebecca Lawler, and Dr. Imelda Muller (NASA photo)

NASA's 10 new Astronaut Candidates were introduced on Sept. 22 following a competitive selection process of more than 8,000 applicants from across the United States. The class now will complete nearly two years of training before becoming eligible for flight assignments supporting future science and exploration missions to low Earth orbit, the Moon, and Mars.

Acting NASA Administrator Sean Duffy welcomed the 2025 Astronaut Candidate class during a ceremony at the agency's Johnson Space Center in Houston.

"The 10 men and women sitting here today embody the truth that in America, regardless of where you start, there is no limit to what a determined dreamer can achieve – even going to space," said Mr. Duffy. "Together, we'll unlock the Golden Age of exploration."

After graduation, the 2025 class will join the agency's active Astronaut Corps. Active Astronauts are conducting science research aboard the space station while preparing for the transition to commercial space stations and the next great leaps in human exploration to the Moon and Mars.

2025 Astronaut Candidates with ties to Naval Aviation and the U.S. Navy:

LCDR Erin Overcash, USN, 34, a USNTPS graduate and experienced F/A-18E and F/A-18F *Super Hornet* pilot with multiple deployments, and more than 1,300 flight hours in 20 aircraft, including 249 carrier arrested landings. LCDR Overcash was part of the Navy's World Class Athlete Program and trained full-time at the Olympic Training Center with the USA Women's National Rugby Team. LCDR Overcash was training for a squadron Department Head tour at the time of selection.

CW3 Ben Bailey, 38, a USNTPS graduate with a Master's Degree in Systems Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School with more than 2,000 flight hours in more than 30 different rotary and fixed-wing aircraft. CW3 Bailey was responsible for the developmental testing of emerging technologies aboard Army rotary wing aircraft, specializing in the UH-60 *Black Hawk* and CH-47F *Chinook*.

Rebecca Lawler, 38, a former Navy LCDR, P-3 *Orion* pilot, and USNTPS Experimental Test Pilot graduate with more than 2,800 flight hours in more than 45 aircraft. Rebecca Lawler flew as a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration hurricane hunter during NASA's *Operation IceBridge*, and was a test pilot for United Airlines at the time of selection.

Katherine Spies, 43, a former Marine Corps AH-1 *Cobra* attack helicopter pilot and Experimental Test Pilot, with more than 2,000 flight hours in more than 30 different aircraft. A graduate of USNTPS, she served as UH-1Y/AH-1Z Project Officer and AH-1W Platform Coordinator during her time on active duty. At the time of her selection, Katherine Spies was the Director of Flight Test Engineering at Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation.

Dr. Imelda Muller, 34, a former LT in the U.S. Navy, served as an Undersea Medical Officer after training at the Naval Undersea Medical Institute. Her experience includes providing medical support during diving training at NASA's Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory. At the time of her selection, Muller was completing a residency in anesthesia at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore.

11th Annual Point Mugu Surf Contest

Navy Opens Legendary California Surf Spot

story by LTJG Drew Verbis, Naval Base Ventura County

Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC) opened its gates to the public to host the 11th Annual Point Mugu Surf Contest near the legendary Pelican Point surf break from July 26-27, 2025.

With this renowned beach, normally closed to the public, thousands of excited spectators enjoyed the amazing surf location and watched over 100 competitors "ride the barrels".

"We are fortunate to be part of an incredible community," said Captain Daniel "DB" Brown, Commanding Officer, NBVC. "It's our honor to open these private beaches, and host an event that celebrates the great culture and way of life in Southern California."

Local surfers in the Ventura, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara County region have an almost mythical folklore of what the surf is like on Point Mugu.

In addition to the surf contest, there was a cornhole tournament and food village, with a beer garden, kids zone, game booths, axe throwing, mechanical bull riding, rock wall climbing, video arcade, military tents, and more.

NBVC is a major shore warfighting platform, providing sustained ready forces to deploy, fight, and win, and is composed of three operating facilities: Point Mugu, Port Hueneme, and San Nicolas Island. NBVC is home of the Pacific Seabees, West Coast E-2D Advanced *Hawkeyes*, 3 Warfare Centers, and 110 tenant commands, including the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, Airborne Command & Control and Logistics Wing, Naval Test Wing Pacific, Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 30 "Bloodhounds", Unmanned Patrol Squadron 19 "Big Red", and Fleet Logistics Support Squadron 55 (VR-55) "Minutemen" .



A U.S. Coast Guard PO2 "rips a wave" during last year's Point Mugu Surf Contest hosted by Naval Base Ventura County (U.S. Navy photo by LTJG Drew Verbis)

First Four T-54A METS Program Graduates

Training Air Wing FOUR

story by LTJG Melvin Fatimehin, Chief of Naval Air Training



Winging ceremony at NAS Corpus Christi for the first four Naval Aviators to graduate from the T-54A Marlin II METS Program, Sept 5, 2025 (U.S. Navy photo by LTJG Alan Wang)

Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA) celebrated a significant achievement this week as the first four Student Naval Aviators from Training Air Wing FOUR (TW-4) successfully completed their multi-engine training in the Navy's new T-54A *Marlin II* "Multi-Engine Training System" (METS) program.

The U.S. Navy declared initial operational capability for the T-54A in May 2024, giving future Naval Aviators a modern platform to prepare them for the advanced aircraft they will fly in the Fleet. These graduates represent the inaugural class of the Navy's upgraded Advanced training pipeline, designed to replace the long-serving T-44C *Pegasus* after over 40 years of service.

"This is a proud moment for TW-4 and the entire Naval Aviation community," said Captain Paul Penn, Commodore of TW-4. "These students embody the future of our multi-engine Fleet, and their success reflects years of careful planning, testing, and teamwork to ensure the T-54A delivers world-class aviators."

Based on the *King Air* 260 platform, the T-54A *Marlin II* introduces advanced avionics, digital displays, and enhanced safety systems to the Navy's undergraduate multi-engine syllabus. Integrated with a comprehensive suite of high-fidelity simulators and a redesigned curriculum under the METS program, students now train on systems and procedures more closely aligned with Fleet aircraft they will go on to fly, such as the P-8A *Poseidon*, E-6B *Mercury* and C-130J *Hercules*.

With the first four graduates now moving on to their Fleet Replacement Squadrons, TW-4 is ready to expand T-54A training in the years ahead. The program plans to ramp up as additional aircraft and simulators are delivered, aiming for full operational capability soon.

"The METS program is about more than just a new aircraft," CAPT Penn emphasized. "It's about equipping our students with the skills they need to excel in a complex, demanding operational environment. Today's milestone confirms we are on the right track."

Headquartered at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas, the Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA) oversees five Training Air Wings and 17 Training Squadrons across Florida, Mississippi, and Texas. These squadrons conduct Primary, Intermediate, and Advanced flight training for Student Naval Aviators, Naval Flight Officers, and Air Vehicle Pilots. CNATRA remains steadfast in its mission to train, mentor, and deliver the highest quality Naval Aviators prepared to win in competition, crisis, and conflict.

National Naval Aviation Museum

Vietnam POW Exhibit Grand Opening

submitted by regular Wings of Gold contributor LT (Fmr) Rick Risher

The National Naval Aviation Museum aboard NAS Pensacola, Florida, opened the "Return With Honor" Vietnam Prisoners of War (POW) Exhibit on Friday, 19 September, 2025, with over 800 active duty, Veteran and civilian invitees in attendance.

Master of Ceremonies and National Naval Aviation Museum Director, CAPT Sterling Gilliam, USN (Ret), welcomed the guests to this highly anticipated event.

The walk of former Prisoners of War to the Atrium stage was next on the agenda as the Pensacola Symphony Orchestra played "America The Beautiful". Immediately following was the Presentation of Colors featuring the Marine Aviation Training Support Group 21 Color Guard, and playing of the "Star Spangled Banner" by the Pensacola Symphony Orchestra Brass with Dr. Patty Crisp.

Chaplain LT John Kenny, USN, gave the Invocation, followed by the Armed Forces Salute medley.

National Naval Aviation Museum Deputy Director and Historian Mr. Hill Goodspeed presented an educational overview of our POWs at Ho Loa Prison (the "Hanoi Hilton") and their negotiated release and return in 1973.

Mrs. Kathy Ensch, from the National League of POW/MIA Families, spoke about the Homefront perspective, and the League staying active in pushing for the Vietnam War to end, with their family members to be returned to America as soon as possible.

CAPT John Ensch USN, a F-4 *Phantom* RIO, then described his shootdown and capture in August, 1972, while flying off USS Midway, (CVA-41). He was held prisoner for eight-plus months before release.

CAPT Michael McGrath, USN, flying an A-4 *Skyhawk* from VA-146, embarked in USS Constellation (CVA-64), was shot down on 30 June, 1967, and captured immediately. He survived six years as a POW in the Hanoi Hilton, playing a key role in prisoner resistance and communication with other prisoners cell to cell, using the improvised "Tap Code" to help each other stay resilient and maintain their morale with dignity.

The first Naval Aviator shot down and taken prisoner on 5 August, 1964, was flying an A-4 *Skyhawk*. CDR Everett Alvarez, USN (Ret), survived eight years and seven months in North Vietnamese prison camps, and described to the audience how elated the POWs were when they heard an agreement had been reached between the United States and North Vietnam to release all prisoners.

"Operation Homecoming" began in February 1973 with USAF C-141s providing lift for POWs from Hanoi to Clark Air Base in the Philippines, and was completed in April 1973, with 591 POWs evacuated.

CDR Alvarez said it best: "We had a code. It was 'Return With Honor'. It was our dignity, our reputation, our character that brought us through."

The event concluded with words from Director CAPT Gilliam, thanking Exhibit Designer, Humberto Martinez Amaro, and President and CEO of the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation, RADM Kyle Cozad, along with all the patriotic attendees.

The Pensacola Symphony Orchestra played, "Eternal Father" and "Stars and Stripes Forever" as the audience departed, knowing they had been part of an epic day that honored our brave and resilient Warriors!



Tailhook Association Symposium



from official press releases

The Tailhook Association's 69th annual symposium took place August 21–23 in Reno, NV, marking its second year at the Grand Sierra Resort.

The theme for Tailhook 2025 was "Dominate Tomorrow," and focused on preparing warfighters for future challenges in Naval Aviation. The annual convention explored innovative strategies and capabilities needed to maintain Naval Aviation superiority.

The symposium was kicked off in the Reno Ball Room on Thursday by Tailhook Chairman RADM Mike Manazir, USN (Ret) and Tailhook President CAPT Kristen Findlay.

As part of the schedule of events, Multiple Aviation Panel sessions were held, covering topics such as Carrier Strike Group power projection, innovation, and Naval Aviation updates to industry partners.

FLAG PANEL AND JUNIOR OFFICER FORUMS

Air Boss VADM Dan Cheever led the Naval Aviation Flag and General Officers Aviation Flag Panel, followed by meetings with Navy and Marine Corps Junior Officer attendees for an open and frank discussion with Naval Aviators in the early stages of their careers. USMC leadership held a follow-up closed-door session with all Marine Aviators, 0-4 and below.

On Saturday, Dr. Daphne Ryan held a medical discussion focused on back injury prevention and other medical issues.

ANA PARTICIPATION AND AWARDS

ANA participated by sponsoring a booth and taking advantage of the unique opportunity to interact with attendees, handing out copies of our 50th Anniversary commemorative edition of *Wings of Gold*, and encouraging new membership sign-ups.

Of special note, at the "Jig Dog" Ramage Awards and Winging Ceremony Luncheon on Saturday, Tailhook Association President Kristen "Dragon" Findlay emcee'd the presentation of annual Fleet Naval Aviation, Tailhook Association, and ANA Tactical Aviation Community Awards.

Framed ANA Awards citations were presented by ANA Chairman ADM Mark Fitzgerald (Ret) and ANA President RADM Deke Philman (Ret).

The Dorothy Flatley Award for AirPac went to Mrs. Katie Mintz in recognition of outstanding volunteer service as Strike Fighter Squadron 102 (VFA-102) "Diamondbacks" Command Ombudsman.

The AirLant Dorothy Flatley Award winner was Mrs. Angela Harris, Command Ombudsman of the Strike Fighter Squadron 105 (VFA-105) "Gunslingers".

LT Dimitri "Hands" Marrese, Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 74 (HSM-74), "Swamp Foxes" MH-60R pilot, was presented the George H.W. Bush Award, recognizing his outstanding performance of duty and leadership demonstrated during the work-up cycle and historic combat deployment to the Red Sea. The award included an engraved trophy sponsored by the Lockheed Martin Corporation.

ANA's Tactical Aviation Award winner was LT Justin Rivera, of the Airborne Command & Control



Air Boss VADM Cheever leads the Naval Aviation Flag and General Officers Aviation Flag Panel on Friday, which focused on Carrier Aviation Warfighting Capability and what is needed to Fight and Win Tomorrow (photo by Come Chantrel)

Squadron 123 (VAW-123) "Screwtops", recognized for outstanding performance of duty while serving with VAW-123 aboard USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) with Carrier Air Wing 3 (CVW-3), assigned to Carrier Strike Group 2 (CSG-2) in support of *Operations Prosperity Guardian, Spartan Shield,* and *Sentinel*.

The Chief Petty Officer of the Year Award was presented to ATCS Michael Epps of the Fleet Logistics Multi-Mission Squadron 30 (VRM-30) "Titans" in recognition of outstanding performance of duty while serving as Maintenance Master Chief Petty Officer (MMCPO) and Maintenance Control Supervisor, Detachment THREE (Det 3) Leading Chief Petty Officer (LCPO), and DET SOQ/SOY Coordinator.

ADM Steve Koehler, Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet was Keynote Speaker for the Saturday Banquet. His remarks focused on the strategic role of Naval Aviation in the Indo-Pacific region, emphasizing interoperability with Allies and innovation to maintain a warfighting advantage.

INDUSTRY DISPLAYS

Among the many industry displays, Sierra Nevada Corporation (SNC), a valued ANA Corporate Sponsor, unveiled its new *Freedom* trainer jet, designed to replace the Boeing T-45 *Goshawk* trainer for the U.S. Navy's Undergraduate Jet Training System (UJTS) competition.

Other defense contractors showcased new technologies, such as Sinnab's *Phoenix Mini EW* and Textron Aviation Defense's M-346N trainer.

Also included as part of Tailhook '25 were numerous social and networking events, Squadron/Wing hospitality suites, a golf tournament, a 5K run, and social hours hosted by numerous Naval Aviation communities.

One of Hook 2025's popular attractions was the unclassified Lockheed Martin F-35 display, which showcased F-35 capabilities to Hook's audience, with interactive software, functional stick, throttle and rudder, and multiple touch screens in a real size cockpit seated inside a 180-degree dome.

The simulator replicated the sensations, sights and sounds of an F-35 flight in a totally immersive environment, allowing attendees to jump directly into key phases of an F-35 flight or mission, including F-35B STOVL landings onboard an air-capable amphibious assault ship or F-35C conventional carrier landings.



Nate Womack, Engineer in Charge of the Lockheed Martin F-35 simulator booth at Hook '25, coaches an attendee during a simulated F-35B STOVL landing (photo by Come Chantrel)

Naval Helicopter Association Event

USS Midway Museum Awards Ceremony

submitted by Mark "Wizard" Denari, CO, ANA Theodore Ellyson Squadron

Recently, the Theodore Ellyson Squadron had the pleasure and honor to represent the Association of Naval Aviation (ANA) at this year's Naval Helicopter Association (NHA) community event held aboard the USS Midway Museum on July 11, 2025 in San Diego, CA.

Along with the presentation of awards, the event included cocktails and a buffet dinner on Midway's flight deck. Representing the Theodore Ellyson Squadron were Mark Denari, CAPT, USN (Ret) and Scott Krambeck, CAPT, USN (Ret).

Annual awards presented to individuals or units, sponsored by ANA, are part of Commander, Naval Air Forces' awards program, under guidance provided by CNAF Instruction 1650.15N.

ANA-sponsored awards recognize specific actions or achievements related to flight operations or maintenance of USN, USMC or USCG aircraft. Award recipients clearly and dramatically demonstrate the ideals of Naval Aviation – courage, resourcefulness, perseverance, innovation, tenacity and unwavering support and dedication to protect and defend the freedom of the United States of America.

Competitive categories for these awards include Fleet Support/Special Mission, Helicopter Aviation, Maritime Patrol Aviation, Tactical Aviation, Outstanding Chief Petty Officer, and Enlisted Aviation Maintenance.

The Fleet Support/Special Mission and Helicopter Aviation Awards that were presented recognized individuals or units that demonstrated outstanding combat or operational actions and technical achievements.

In addition, the RADM A.C. Read Navigator Award, the President George H.W. Bush Award, and Dorothy Flatley Awards to spouses from AirPac and AirLant are also included as part of the CNAF Awards program.

The following 2025 CNAF ANA awards were presented at the Awards Recognition Ceremony:

Helicopter Aviation Award

The 2025 Helicopter Aviation Award was presented to Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 74 (HSM-74), the "Swamp Foxes," for exceptional performance of duty during their nine-month combat deployment aboard USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69), USS Philippine Sea (CG-58), USS Mason (DDG-87), and USS Gravely (DDG-107).

Fleet Support/Special Mission Award

The 2025 Fleet Support/Special Mission Award was presented to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 21, Detachment 3 (HSC-21 Det 3), the "Blackjacks", who were recognized for their outstanding performance of duty, professionalism and innovation across both Strike Force NATO and Naval Forces Europe.

President George H. W. Bush Award

The 2025 President George H. W. Bush Award was presented to LT Dimitri "Hands" Marrese USN for outstanding performance of duty and leadership demonstrated during the work-up cycle and historic combat deployment to the Red Sea with the HSM-74 "Swamp Foxes." An additional presentation of this award to LT Marrese was conducted at the Tailhook '25 Symposium in Reno, NV.

The Theodore Ellyson Squadron continues to reach out and connect with the local active duty aviation community, with the notion that ANA membership goes "hand in hand" with community membership. As the Theodore Ellyson Squadron forges ahead, we also look forward to hosting a Happy Hour for commands aboard NAS North Island.

VR-62 "Nomads" 40th Anniversary Celebration

submitted by AWFCS Michael Wendelin, USN (Ret)

On August 12, 2025, NAS Jacksonville's Fleet Logistics Support Squadron Six Two (VR-62) "Nomads" celebrated their 40th Anniversary.

"Nomads" CMC Troy Rudisill said, "It was great to be a part of the celebration and to give recognition to all those who have served with VR-62."

Sailors past and present gathered at Hangar 1000 at NAS Jacksonville to celebrate VR-62's 40 years of operational service to the Fleet. The event included Former Commanding Officers and Command Master Chiefs.

VR-62 was established on July 1, 1985, at NAF Detroit, flying the McDonnell Douglas C-9B *Skytrain II*, with CAPT Ray B. Lambert Commanding. Then known as the VR-62 "Motowners," a reference to its home base in Detroit, the "Motor City", VR-62 has been on the move since 1985, with three subsequent changes of station. The first move came in April 1994, as NAF Detroit closed under the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Program.

VR-62 relocated to NAS South Weymouth, Massachusetts in 1994 and transitioned to the Lockheed C-130T *Hercules*, renaming themselves the VR-62 "Mass Transit." The transition to the C-130 completely changed the way VR-62 viewed Navy Logistics; now it was much more about cargo and less about transporting Sailors. VR-62 would now be forward-deployed to locations such as Bahrain, Italy, and Japan.

It wasn't long before NAS South Weymouth was closed under the BRAC program in 1996, causing VR-62 to change home ports again, this time to NAS Brunswick, Maine, and became the VR-62 "Nor'easters". After 10 years at NAS Brunswick, another BRAC occurred in 2009, and NAS Brunswick was closed, resulting in one more move for VR-62 to NAS Jacksonville, where they became known as the "Nomads" - a fitting call sign.

Current CO, CDR Anthony Bomba, kicked off the ceremony by thanking all the former crew members, and especially the families of current and former VR-62 squadron members. CDR Bomba said, "It's a tribute to the aircraft that has carried our mission forward, the Sailors who made it happen, and the enduring legacy of this exceptional squadron." CDR Bomba went on to say, "So today let's celebrate. Let us remember the past, take pride in the present, and look forward to the future. Here's to 40 years of unwavering service."

Commander Bomba then introduced RDML Bryon "BT" Smith, "Nomads" Commanding Officer from March 2014 to June 2015. "This squadron consistently exceeds the expectations of our active-duty counterparts and the U.S. Navy, regularly and spectacularly," said RDML Smith.

The "Nomads" have operated the C-130T since 1995. The current stable of six C-130Ts assigned to VR-62 has logged over 107,340 flight hours.

CMC Troy Rudisill noted that VR-62 has gone 39 consecutive years Class A mishap free.

VR-62 is one of five Navy Reserve C-130 squadrons providing Navy Fleet Essential Airlift around the globe.



VR-62 CO CDR Anthony Bomba and RDML Bryon Smith arrive for the festivities at Hangar 1000, NAS Jacksonville, FL, "Nomad Country" (U.S. Navy photo by AT1(AW) Steven J. Bourdeau)


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NAS Lemoore Search and Rescue

The Rescue of Mark Wellman: Part 1

submitted by Phil Amrhein, Captain, American Airlines (Retired)

On August 19, 1982, the duty Search and Rescue (SAR) crew at NAS Lemoore, CA received tasking from the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center at Scott AFB to assist in the retrieval of a mountain climber who had fallen while descending from the peak of Seven Gables Mountain located in the Sierra Nevada Range, 13,075 ft above sea level. The victim was Mark Wellman, a 21-year-old mountain climber from Palo Alto, CA.

Mark and his climbing partner had reached the summit of the Seven Gables Mountain in the late afternoon on August 18, 1982. Navigating from rock to rock on his descent, Mark slid on some loose rock and bounced down the mountain for over 100 feet, coming to rest on a ledge several hundred feet below the summit. His clothes were shredded, he was unable to take deep breaths, and he was bleeding from the back of his skull. He was in severe pain and able only to move his legs.

Mark's climbing partner, Peter Enzminger, climbed down to his position. Unable to move Mark, Peter covered Mark's legs and draped a sweater over his torso. Peter left M&M's, an orange, and water, and set out for help. It would be twenty-four hours before help would arrive.

Mark was stranded in freezing conditions. Praying for the warming of the morning sun, he survived the night, and in the afternoon, a cool breeze started to pick up, with thunderstorms forming to the south, and closing fast.

Suddenly, the bratling of helicopter blades sent a surge of adrenaline through Mark. A California Highway Patrol (CHP) helicopter, alerted by Peter, had located him. But the light CHP helicopter, with only two pilots onboard, was not capable of retrieving Mark from this remote location, and departed the area, issuing the call for assistance. The CHP helicopter's departure was a gut punch to Mark, but help would soon be on the way.



Phil Amrhein and NAS Lemoore SAR UH-1N following Mountain landing, circa 1981/82 (photo courtesy Phil Amrhein)

LAUNCH THE ALERT

We were standing SAR alert at NAS Lemoore. Our rescue UH-1N launched in response to the call. Our SAR crew consisted of myself, Co-Pilot LT Larry E. Hayes, Crew Chief AMH-3 Joseph Arruda, Rescue Crewman AT-1 Michael J. Potts, and Rescue Medical Corpsman HM-3 James M. Mason.

An hour after launch, we arrived on scene, but so had the closing storm. Hampered by strong winds and icing conditions, our only choice was to land in a high, secluded meadow several miles away and wait for the weather to pass.

In the cockpit, Co-Pilot Larry Hayes and I consulted the UH-1N performance charts. We were at the upper limits. With temperature higher than standard, the density altitude - the "real" air we breathe, that engines use, and that rotors bite to create lift - was even higher than the pressure altitude. The charts indicated that any rescue attempt under these conditions would be…*very problematic*.

Next Up – The Rescue Continues. We must trust our machine, and each other.

CNATRA Instructor Pilot of the Year

feature & photo from Morgan Galvin, Public Affairs Officer, Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA)

"COD has made a huge impact on the 'Rangers' and sets the standard for primary flight training instruction. His proactivity and focus on taking the squadron from good to great is evidenced by the students he flies with and the level of skill and professionalism in our instructor cadre. He is hungry and knocks every challenge out of the park."

CDR James "Smack" McNamee, CO VT-28



CNATRA IPOY LT John "COD" Maloney; his wife, Allison; and their newest family addition

LT John "COD" Maloney of Palmetto, Florida was named CNATRA Instructor Pilot of the Year for 2025. With the "Rangers" of VT-28, LT John "COD" Maloney served as Formation Category Officer, Standardization Officer, with T-6 *Texan II* Quals, including Standardization Instructor in Day Contact, Night Contact, Visual Navigation, Instrument Navigation, Formation, Cruise Formation, Out of Control Flight, Tactical Formation Instructor, Assistant NATOPS Instructor, NATOPS Instrument Evaluator, CRM Facilitator, Section Lead, Division Lead, Functional Check Pilot, and IUT Instructor.

LT Maloney graduated in 2015 from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University with a Degree in Aeronautics, was winged in 2018, and served in Patrol Squadron 10 (VP-10) from Oct 2019-Dec 2022, flying the P-8A *Poseidon* as Patrol Plane Commander, Mission Commander and Functional Check Pilot, on Deployments or Detachments to Misawa (Japan), Okinawa (Japan), El Salvador, the Philippines, Diego Garcia, Norway, and Iceland.

"My tour at VT-28 has been without a doubt the most enjoyable and rewarding time of my Navy career thus far. I wouldn't be here without the help of all my past COs, my friends, and most importantly, my amazing wife, Allison."

LT John "COD" Maloney

MAG-24 Supports Navy Junior ROTC Training Camp

story by 2ndLt Joseph Adcock, USMC, 1st MAW

The Kalāheo High School Navy Junior ROTC Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) recently executed their annual Basic Cadet Training (BCT) camp at Marine Corps Base Hawai'i (MCBH). The event immersed Cadets in the core values, operations and culture of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.

Kalāheo NJROTC has a long history of partnering with MCBH to introduce first-year Cadets to U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps principles. As the official unit sponsor, Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 153 (VMGR-153), a subordinate squadron of Marine Aircraft Group 24 (MAG-24), worked closely with MCBH to coordinate guided tours, static displays and military instruction from September 12-13, 2025.

"MCBH Kāne'ohe has been a tremendous partner over the years," said retired LCDR Henry Van Oss, the program's Senior Naval Science Instructor. "The support provided by MCBH is a key factor in successfully orienting our new first-year cadets to Navy JROTC and the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps team."

NJROTC is an elective program emphasizing self-discipline, character development and leadership. At Kalāheo High School, the program supports federally mandated goals as well as many Hawai'i Content Performance Standards. While participation does not require a military obligation, it provides numerous benefits for Cadets interested in military careers.

This year's training began with guided tours of the Marine Corps Air Station, Air Traffic Control tower and Radar Room. Cadets then moved to the flight line to learn about Marine Corps aircraft and equipment, including the KC-130J *Super Hercules* and MV-22B *Osprey*.

In addition to the aircraft displays, Cadets also learned about some of the engineering equipment used by Marine Wing Support Squadron 174.

After an event-filled morning on the first day of training, Cadets had lunch while the Sergeant Major of MAG-24, SgtMaj Christopher Rivera who spoke about physical and mental toughness, the ability to lead, and his personal connection to the program. Many of the Cadets recognized SgtMaj Rivera because of his daughter, who recently graduated from the Kalāheo High School NJROTC program. "Seeing my daughter benefit directly from the NJROTC program makes this deeply personal. She was a Cadet in Kalāheo's NJROTC, and the exposure, discipline, and mentorship she received laid the foundation for her transformation. Supporting and mentoring Cadets is MAG-24's way of creating that future, ensuring we leave it in capable hands."



Kalāheo High School NJROTC Cadet explores the cockpit of a KC-130J during a static display presentation at MCAS Kaneohe Bay, HI, Sept. 12, 2025 (USMC photo by SSgt Heather Atherton)

The second day, Cadets gained hands-on experience with simulated marksmanship training before attending a military and career orientation and leadership training.

Following this year's Basic Cadet Training Camp, Cadets can move forward with more confidence in their ability to lead others and overcome adversity. Through collaborative programs and opportunities, MAG-24 and MCBH will continue supporting cadets in their journey to build resilience, embrace responsibility, and answer the call of leadership.

VX-30 Enables First Overseas Army *Typhon* Launch

story by Michael Smith, Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division



VX-30 and U.S. Army team members in front of a KC-130T Hercules following a successful surrogate flight during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025 (U.S. Navy photo by Michael Smith)

Before the U.S. Army fired a Standard Missile-6 from its *Typhon* system during Exercise Talisman Sabre in Australia on July 16, a Navy aircraft from Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 30 (VX-30) had already flown the mission as a silent rehearsal.

The modified KC-130T *Hercules* served as a surrogate missile, allowing ground systems in Australia to test communication, telemetry, and tracking before the real launch. Its flight provided critical trajectory data that enabled the Army's first live *Typhon* launch outside the continental United States.

"We turned the plane into a fake missile," said Nathan Stock, Platform Coordinator for VX-30. "They tracked us like they would track the actual missile."

The Army's 3rd Multi-Domain Task Force carried out the live fire days later, striking a maritime target with an SM-6. It marked the first overseas use of the *Typhon* launcher, known as the Mid-Range Capability.

The mission began with a short-notice request routed through U.S. Army Pacific. VX-30 was selected for its ability to carry long-range test equipment, modify aircraft quickly, and deliver both flight data and in-flight support from remote locations. From mission request to execution, the entire process took less than three months.

Sam Newcomer, a VX-30 Engineer supporting the mission, said the Army's Virtual Onboard Missile system was shipped directly to Australia. The squadron never had physical access to it until arrival at Nackaroo, an Australian Army training area in the Northern Territory.

"It had to be sanitized and shipped ahead of us. We built everything to spec without laying eyes on it," said Mr. Newcomer.

To overcome Australia's limited range infrastructure, VX-30 used the Satellite Communications Range Extension Aircraft Modification system, or SCREAM. Installed in 2024, the system enabled beyond-line-of-sight communications via *Starlink* and leveraged the aircraft's existing power, RF, and GPS systems.

The SCREAM integration gave the Army a real-time link to the surrogate missile flown by VX-30.

During rehearsal flights, the KC-130T validated telemetry connections and simulated the missile's trajectory to confirm range coordination before the live launch.

"SCREAM proved its value in a real-world environment," said Captain David Halpern, Commodore of Naval Test Wing Pacific. "It gave the Army a direct link to their surrogate missile across terrain that otherwise would've gone dark. That's the kind of flexible capability we need in contested environments."

NAWCWD's Innovation Lab accelerated preparations by providing computer-aided design (CAD) resources to develop the adapter and plan its integration. Engineers used 3D-printed prototypes to verify the fit on the aircraft. Once confirmed, the parts were sent out for machining. That step saved time and helped avoid costly rework.

VX-30 Engineer Drew Hines designed the new antenna adapter installed on the modified aircraft. While the squadron had previously installed antennas on the aircraft's skin, this was the first time a team engineer designed a custom adapter plate from scratch.

VX-30 also relied on support from the Point Mugu Sea Range Airborne Systems Team, who built wiring harnesses and helped integrate electrical components into the modified aircraft.

In Australia, success depended on real-time coordination and leadership. LCDR McKenna Cox, Officer in Charge of the VX-30 Detachment, led efforts to align mission timelines, aircrew planning, and evolving Army requirements on the ground.

CDR Barry Carmody, VX-30's Commanding Officer, said the operation reflected the squadron's technical readiness and commitment to joint warfighting. "This mission showcased our aircrew and engineers' ability to rapidly understand, plan, and execute test requirements, all while maintaining sharp focus on warfighting capability."

For VX-30, the work reinforced the value of technical readiness, agile teams, and mission-driven collaboration. It also confirmed NAWCWD's ability to deliver capability where and when it matters.

"The 'Bloodhounds' will continue to conduct flight tests worldwide and integrate seamlessly with the Joint Force," CDR Carmody said.

VX-31 Bids Farewell to the *Harrier*



Jim "Jimbo" Coppersmith, Technical Director for Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 31 (VX-31), exits the cockpit of an AV-8B Harrier following its final flight at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Sept. 23, 2025, marking the end of the Harrier era for the squadron (U.S. Navy photo by Michael Smith)

Photo Highlights



E-2D Advanced Hawkeye of the VAW-117 "Wallbangers" refuels inflight from USAF MC-130J Commando II in the Central Command Area of Responsibility (photo courtesy CNAF PAO and AFSOC/SOCCENT)



P-8A Poseidon assigned to "The Skinny Dragons" of Patrol Squadron 4 (VP-4) takes off from NSF Diego Garcia during bilateral combined detachment and training with the Indian Navy, Oct 2025 (U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Samantha Jetzer)

Purdue University Masters Degree for USNTPS Graduates

submitted by NAWCAD Public Affairs

The U.S. Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS) is known for shaping the future of Naval Aviation. Now, it's also shaping the future of its graduates, offering a path to earn a Master's Degree from Purdue University by completing Test Pilot School at USNTPS and becoming a certified as a Test Pilot, Test Flight Officer, or Flight Test Engineer.

USNTPS, renowned for graduating nearly 100 Astronauts and training the world's best Test Pilots, Test Flight Officers, ands Flight Test Engineers, now offers a unique opportunity to earn a Master of Engineering Technology or Interdisciplinary Engineering by completing its rigorous flight test curriculum. This means that USNTPS graduates can earn a respected graduate degree without adding extra time to their training commitment.

This new partnership translates into tangible career advantages. USNTPS graduates, who gain real-world expertise applying cutting-edge engineering principles to solve complex challenges in flight testing while flying more than 20 different aircraft types during the year-long USNTPS course. Graduates will now join the ranks of elite Test Pilots, Test Flight Officers, and Flight Test Engineers distinguished by a respected graduate degree from a top-tier university, giving them a competitive edge with advanced knowledge and skills.

Purdue University's School of Aeronautics and Astronautics is world-renowned for its historical significance, strong academic programs, and impressive list of alumni, including numerous Astronauts and leaders in the aerospace industry.

The unmatched experience gained at USNTPS makes graduates highly sought after throughout Naval Aviation and beyond, opening doors to exciting leadership and technical roles.

This unique partnership recognizes the academic rigor of USNTPS training. By integrating flight test curricula with Purdue's graduate requirements, USNTPS has created a seamless path for perspective students to achieve both professional and academic excellence.

For Naval Aviators, Naval Flight Officers, and Flight Test Engineers ready to push the boundaries of flight and advance their careers, USNTPS is the ultimate destination. It is an opportunity to elevate skills, earn a Master's degree, and become a leader in Naval Aviation.

The Sky is the Limit!

Academic Year 2025-2026

Philip H. Jones Scholarship

update provided by Melissa Garrison, Scholarship Administrator, Wings Over America Scholarship Foundation



LCDR Philip H. Jones

The Philip H. Jones Family and the Association of Naval Aviation are pleased to sponsor annual Philip H. Jones Naval Aviation Scholarships that honor the service and sacrifice of LCDR Philip H. Jones, who served as a Naval Aviator during WWII. His son, Philip H. Jones, II, established a scholarship fund in the name of his father.

The Scholarship principally provides scholarship opportunities for the children of Naval Aviators and Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard Aircrewmen. Priority is given to children of a Naval Aviator or Aircrewman who has died of any cause while serving on Active Duty orders in the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard.

The Scholarship program provides funds to cover or defer the cost of tuition and fees for the recipient's undergraduate schooling.

To administer the execution of the scholarship awards, ANA works with Wings Over America Scholarship Foundation.

The Wings Over America Scholarship Foundation hosted their annual scholarship reception in Norfolk on 9 June, at which Philip H. Jones Naval Aviation Scholarships for Academic Year 2025-2026 were awarded to the following recipients:

Ryan Harris, of Norfolk, Virginia, a Senior at Davidson College majoring in Psychology with a minor in Public Health, active in multiple organizations, such as the Track and Field Team, Kappa Sigma fraternity, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Ryan's Sponsor is CDR Kevin Hudson.

Karlyn Marte of Saint Johns, Florida, a Freshman at the University of Florida, majoring in Biology on a pre-Med track with a minor in Entrepreneurship, who will be chasing the dream of becoming a Pediatric Critical Care Specialist. Karlyn's Sponsor is LCDR Warlin E. Marte.

Jackson Adams of Walla Walla, Washington, a Junior at Northwestern University majoring in Mechanical Engineering, who balances academics with activities including competing on the Northwestern University Sailing Team and working for the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. Jackson's Sponsor is CAPT Daniel Howard Adams.

Congratulations to these Scholarship recipients!

To apply for the Philip H. Jones Naval Aviation Scholarship, please visit the Wings Over America Scholarship Foundation at *https://wingsoveramerica.us* for an application. You may also call 757-228-3314 to obtain additional information.

ACES Act Enacted - Thank You ANA!

submitted by Vince "Aztec" Alcazar, Military Aviator Coalition for Health (MACH)



Earlier this year, ANA joined the Military Aviator Coalition for Health (MACH). *What is MACH?* What the TEAM Coalition is to Army and Marine Corps land warfare forces, MACH is to Department of Navy and Department of Air Force fixed-wing flyers. When ANA joined, it pushed the total MACH membership to 13 organizations. It turns out, ANA made a big difference.

As ANA joined MACH, we were launching our grassroots advocacy campaign in the 119th Congress. The object of the advocacy was the Aviator Cancer Examination Study (ACES) Act. After working unsuccessfully to get the ACES Act out of committee since 2022, MACH attained sufficient mass in 2025 to produce thousands of organized voices oriented on federal lawmakers and staffers. Our unified voice and disciplined message propelled the ACES Act past lawmaker and staffer skepticism.

Congressman August "Pfoto" Pfluger (R TX), Air Force, and Senator Mark Kelly (D AZ), Navy were the champions, whose individual efforts got the ACES Act to the Oval Office on August 13 for PoTUS signature.

What happens next? When aviator cancer advocacy began in 2019, the strategy was straightforward: advocate for studies to map the cancer problem. In 2021, our advocacy inserted language into that DOD authorization which yielded the DOD 2023 and 2024 fixed-wing aviator cancer studies. Both studies found significantly elevated levels of cancer. For example, melanoma was over 80% higher for fixed-wing flyers across DOD, contrasted to the U.S. general population. Melanoma matters because it's the skin cancer that kills; it can metastasize into other dangerous cancers.

ACES directs the VA to let a study contract to the National Academy of Science, Engineering & Medicine (NASEM) to determine what is causing our surging cancer. The NASEM study will likely take 2-3 years. Afterwards, we ought to have a data-driven understanding of what is causing elevated cancer levels in the military aerospace operating environments. Here, the ACES Act asks NASEM to study land and maritime-based flying environments.

After the NASEM study, MACH will engage on the third, final segment of our strategy. Specifically, we already know enough to advocate that DOD and VA both create tailored cancer screening criteria. With highly elevated cancers, it makes no sense for military aerospace medicine to use the same cancer screening criteria for civilians that work downtown. We also believe DOD and VA ought to lead research on new, promising cancer early detection technology. We do not see a silver bullet for high cancer rates because our cancers are most likely not caused by one factor.

We're frequently asked about studying DOD rotary-wing cancer rates. In late July, Congressman Rich McCormick (R GA), former USMC CH-53 pilot, introduced H.R. 4704. This bill would direct DOD to conduct the first-ever Navy, Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps cancer study of rotary-wing (including V-22) Aviators, regardless of fleet, seat, rank, role.

In 2022, NASEM counseled us to split fixed-wing and rotary-wing cancer study efforts, which means doing 200% of the advocacy work, but this approach ensures that the rotary-wing study remains fully focused on that population.

In summary, MACH is moving forward, thanks to the voices of ANA members. Onward!

The Patuxent Partnership Panels

"Building Bridges": Advancing Global Defense Partnerships

submitted by Sam "Messy" Messer, ANA Patuxent River CO



"Building Bridges" panel (L-R): Sam Messer, RDML Tony Rossi, RDML (sel) Ray Owens, Ms. Bonnie Green, RAN Commodore David Frost, Mr. Chad Leigh (photo by Vandy Young)

ANA Patuxent River Squadron's 56th panel event on 20 May, in collaboration with The Patuxent Partnership, brought together senior leaders from Defense Security Cooperation, across the U.S. and the Royal Australian Navy, for an evening focused on partnership and Allies.

Keynote speaker Rear Admiral Tony Rossi, Director of the Navy International Programs Office (NIPO), led the discussion alongside distinguished panelists: Commodore David Frost, Royal Australian Navy (RAN), Naval Attaché and Assistant Defense Attaché for Embassy of Australia; Rear Admiral (select) Ray Owens, OPNAV N51 Branch Head for Security Cooperation and International Affairs; and Mr. Chad Leigh, Director of International Programs at the Precision Strike Weapons Program Office (PMA-201). Together, they provided a unique opportunity for the Pax River community to engage directly with leaders shaping the future of defense cooperation, a key aspect of our National Defense Strategy.

RDML Rossi is no stranger to Pax River, having led two major acquisition efforts at NAVAIR, including the P-8 program, which has significant foreign military sales and other developmental programs across multiple allied nations. He opened with remarks underscoring the strength and trust of our partnerships.

The panelists then each offered remarks to an audience of government leaders, industry representatives, and members of the Pax River community.

Commodore Frost highlighted the importance of 'mateship' in Australia and its cultural and operational parallels with the Navy's ethos of 'shipmate', a term that would become the theme for the evening.

Following the formal remarks, RDML Rossi moderated a very engaging Q&A session with the attendees at the Pax River Naval Air Museum. The forum allowed both the panelists and audience to engage very directly on strategic and tactical ways to better serve our international stakeholders and in turn, provide benefits back to the U.S.

The evening concluded with a reception, providing opportunities for one-on-one discussions with the senior leaders in attendance.

"Project Eagle": Requirements Funding and Acquisition Strategy for the Marine Corps

On 10 September, the ANA Patuxent River Squadron, in collaboration with The Patuxent Partnership and the Marine Corps Aviation Association John Glenn Squadron, held a panel event focused on "Project Eagle", a central tenet of the 2025 Marine Aviation Plan.

Keynote speaker BGen David Walsh, Program Executive Officer for Air Anti-submarine Warfare, Assault and Special Mission Programs (PEO(A)), guided the discussion alongside distinguished panelists: BGen Dustin Byrum, Assistant Deputy Commandant for Aviation (ADCA); BGen Robert Meade, Assistant Deputy Commandant for Programs, Programs and Resources (P&R); and Col Thomas Dono, Chief of Staff, Marine Corps Systems Command (MARCORSYSCOM). Together, they represented a cross section of warfighter requirements, resourcing and acquisition, providing a unique opportunity to engage on all the elements needed to realize the vision of "Project Eagle".

BGen Walsh has deep experience with the acquisition system as both a tester and program manager prior to his current role at PEO(A). He shared that during his time as an Acquisition Professional, he has observed that successful programs have had a consistent thread of communication and collaboration between government and industry. Completing his initial remarks and introductions of the panel members, he led the discussion into the Q&A portion of the in-person panel event, and opened the floor to questions from the packed audience.

The questions covered a plethora of topics ranging from the application of artificial intelligence to the Marine's acquisition workforce. All of the panel members stayed well after to engage in one-on-one conversations with the attendees, which is one of the most valuable aspects of these events.



"Project Eagle" panel (L-R): Sam Messer, BGen Dustin Byrum, BGen David Walsh, Ms. Bonnie Green, BGen Robert Meade, Col Thomas Dono, Col James Reynolds, Steve Girard (photo by Addison Welch)

SQUADRON NEWS

Patriot Squadron (South Weymouth, Massachusetts)

update & photo submitted by Marc J. Frattasio, AW1 USNR (Ret)



A typical open house at the Patriot Squadron's Shea Naval Aviation Museum, with members Frank Ward, Robert Michaelski, Steve Cohn, Rita Cavonius, and Joseph Muise digging into a variety of German "Kutchen" baked fresh that morning by Rita before the museum was opened for visitors on Saturday, September 13 (photo by Marc Frattasio)

As of this writing (September 2025) the Patriot Squadron's Shea Naval Aviation Museum has been open in its new venue for four months. Word is steadily spreading across the Boston area that the museum is back in operation after a nine-year hiatus and people come to visit every day that it is open.

The museum is presently open only from 9am to noon on the second and last Saturdays of the month. If more volunteers can be found to help tend the museum, the Patriot Squadron would like to extend its hours and dates of operation. In order to achieve this, the Patriot Squadron recently kicked off a membership drive. Our short-term objective is to grow the organization from the present 84 members to 100.

Although 84 members may seem like a lot, many of them reside outside the South Weymouth area and their ability to actively participate in Patriot Squadron activities tends to be limited. We're hoping to attract new members from the local area who will be able to help us achieve our goal of keeping the museum open more often and for a longer time.

The Patriot Squadron is the Boston area affiliate of the Association of Naval Aviation. The group is dedicated to preserving the history and heritage of NAS South Weymouth and its predecessor NAS Squantum at the Union Point real estate development on the site of former NAS South Weymouth in Weymouth, Massachusetts. Members meet at 11am on the last Saturday of the month at the Shea Naval Aviation Museum, which is located in a small white building behind the soccer fields at Union Point. If you live in the Boston area and would like to help ensure that NAS South Weymouth and NAS Squantum are not forgotten, please consider joining the Patriot Squadron. For more information go to our web site at *www.anapatriotsquadron.org* or see us on Facebook at *www.facebook.com/SheaNavalAviationMuseum.*

SQUADRON NEWS

High Desert Squadron (Bend, Oregon)

story & photo submitted by Sam Morris, Col USMC (Ret), High Desert Squadron CO

The High Desert Squadron is fortunate to have a unique individual in our squadron, Col Colben "Keith" Sime, USMC (Ret). After a 25-year Aviator career, 2 tours in Vietnam, 10 years with Lockheed's Space Systems Division, and 10 years in real estate, he took up serious running late in life. He ran the 4th Marine Corps Marathon in 1979 in 3 hours and 57 minutes on a dare from one of his Pentagon Marine Corps Associates.

One of Keith's mantras is "*you don't know what you can do until you try it.*" So, when one of his adult children decided to run the Portland, OR Marathon in 2008, he decided, at 75, to run it also. Joined by four more family members, all six finished. As it turns out, unbeknownst to him at the time, Keith finished within 15 minutes of the Boston Marathon Qualifying time. So, in 2009, Keith "tried it" again in Portland, was first in his age group, and qualified for the Boston Marathon. After some more training, he ran the Boston Marathon in 2011 at 78, and was 3rd in his age group. Not satisfied, and exercising his other mantra, "*never give up*", both Keith and his oldest son, also an avid runner, subsequently qualified and ran the 2015 Boston Marathon together. So, Keith, at 82, ran a father/son Boston Marathon - a true lifetime memorable event.

Fast forward to 2017. After recovering from a back problem that had put him on the sidelines, Keith decided that at his age, marathon training/marathons had become too onerous and looked for other running venues. He has since found a number of venues for senior runners. The first one he found was the USA Track and Field (USATF) Masters Association for runners 25 and older. Among other events, they sponsor a National Masters Outdoor Open and an Indoor Open (open to anyone over 25) each year. Keith first competed in the 2019 USA Track and Field Masters Outdoor Open, running the 10,000M, 5,000M, 100M, 200M, 400M, 800M and 1500M events in the 85 – 89 age group. There were no meets in 2020 because of COVID. Beginning in 2021, Keith added the USATF Masters Indoor to his annual schedule, as well as competing in the National Senior Games, competing in all the running events. The National Senior Games sponsors a plethora of over 20 different kinds of events (pickleball, horseshoes, tennis, basketball, etc) for competitors every two years for those 50 years old and older, and also qualified in the state games the year before. In 2024, Keith began competing internationally, running in the World Masters Outdoor Competition in Gothenburg Sweden.



Col Colben "Keith" Sime, USMC (Ret)

SQUADRON NEWS

High Desert Squadron, cont. (Bend, Oregon)

He currently is the 90-94 age group World Champion in the 5,000M until he must defend his title in Daegu, South Korea in 2026.

This year, Keith competed in the 90-94 age group in the USATF Masters Indoor Open and the World Masters Indoor open meets in Gainesville, FL; the USATF Masters Outdoor Open in Huntsville, AL; the National Senior Games in Ames, IA; and just finished competing in a meet put on by the Potomac Valley Track Club in Alexandria, VA. The "stars were aligned" as he medaled in 31 of the 33 events in which he competed, taking 18 Gold, 10 Silver and 3 Bronze medals. Of these, two were in relays that set National Records.

Keith considers that he has had a successful year, attributes a great deal of his success to his mantras, and is looking forward to competing Nationally and Internationally in 2026.

Helldiver Squadron (Columbus, Ohio)

update & photos submitted by CDR William Mnich, USN (Ret), Helldiver Squadron CO, and CAPT Louise Mnich, USNR (Ret), ANA National Board Member



Restored Curtiss SB2C Helldiver in flight (photo courtesy Evan Fagen, Fagen Fighters Restoration)

The Helldiver's annual Fall Picnic was again held at NAS Mnich, where food and libation were available in limitless supply. Although the pool was open and temps were in the mid-80s, there were no takers for swim call as the members instead sought shade and air conditioning!

Recognition was given to two individuals who tied for first place in our monthly Naval Aviation quiz competition: Dick Cragg and Udo Maroscher, both of whom were awarded an ANA 50th Anniversary challenge coin. Embarrassingly for the gold-wingers among us, both of these distinguished Naval Officers were from the SWO community!

So, what's Naval Aviation got to do with Columbus, Ohio? In short: Curtiss-Wright, North American Aviation, and Rockwell International. The carrier-based Curtiss SB2C *Helldiver* – the Navy's last purpose-built dive bomber – was designed and produced at the Curtiss-Wright plant at what is now John Glenn International Airport. Of 7,140 total *Helldivers*, 5,106 were built in Columbus, 1,134

SQUADRON NEWS



NAS Mnich event, with Mr. Jesse Hockenbery; Mr. Jim Patterson; LCDR Elizabeth Clifton, USN (Ret); CDR Bill Mnich, USN (Ret); LCDR Jim "Snake" Patterson, USN (Ret); Mr. John Miller; Mr. Udo Maroscher; CAPT Ken "Wahoo" Ginader, USN (Ret); Mr. Dick Cragg; CAPT George Williams, USN (Ret); CAPT Bill Tate, USN (Ret) (photo courtesy Bill Mnich)

in Canada, and 900 in St. Louis for the USAAF (designated the A-25A *Shrike*). Despite criticism of the handling qualities of early SB2Cs (which Navy pilots dubbed the "S.O.B. Second Class"), the *Helldiver* reportedly sunk more enemy tonnage than any other WWII Navy aircraft. In addition to the U.S., the *Helldiver* was operated by Australia, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Thailand, and the UK. It was flown by U.S. Naval Reserve squadrons until 1950, with final retirement from the Italian Air Force in 1959.

After Curtiss-Wright shuttered the Columbus plant in 1950, the Navy acquired the property and leased it to North American Aviation, which in 1967 became North American Rockwell. Significant naval aircraft designed and produced exclusively by the Columbus Division were the T-2 *Buckeye* (529 airplanes), the OV-10 *Bronco* (360 total), and every A3J/A-5/RA-5C *Vigilante* (167 total).

The facility transferred from Navy to Air Force ownership in 1982, Rockwell moved out in 1988 upon completion of the B-1 bomber program, and the site was leased to McDonnell Douglas, which was acquired by Boeing in 1997. Boeing sold the property to an investment group and a portion of it is now home to Signature Flight Support.

Three Curtiss SB2Cs are currently in airworthy condition: BuNo 83589 has been operated for decades by the Commemorative Air Force in Houston, TX. BuNo 83393 returned to flight in July 2024, nearly 79 years to the day after it crashed in Dahlgren, VA in July 1945. It was restored and is operated by Fagen Fighters, Granite Falls, MN. USAAF Serial No. 75552 (an A-25A *Shrike*) took to the sky in late July of this year, restored by Westpac Restorations and operated by the National Museum of World War II Aviation, both of Colorado Springs, CO. This aircraft was damaged in a landing accident near Seattle in 1945, stripped of useful parts, used as a fire training aid, and then dumped in Lake Washington in 1948. Forty years later, it was discovered by two 19-year old scuba divers who brought it up from 150ft with lift bags. After winning a lawsuit with the Navy to establish civilian ownership, the wreckage was eventually acquired by Westpac, where it was restored to better-than-new condition. The CAF and Fagen *Helldivers* were built in Columbus, the *Shrike* in St. Louis.

Pictured in the Mnich wardroom: Mr. Jesse Hockenbery; Mr. Jim Patterson; LCDR Elizabeth Clifton, USN (Ret); CDR Bill Mnich, USN (Ret); LCDR Jim "Snake" Patterson, USN (Ret); Mr. John Miller; Mr. Udo Maroscher; CAPT Ken "Wahoo" Ginader, USN (Ret); Mr. Dick Cragg; CAPT George Williams, USN (Ret); CAPT Bill Tate, USN (Ret).

SQUADRON NEWS

French Crusaders Squadron (France)

update & photos submitted by Jean-Michel Maurel, French Crusaders Squadron CO



USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78) in port, Marseille, France (photo by Christian Bouschon)

The first-in-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78) and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG-81) arrived in Marseille, France for a scheduled port visit August 4, 2025 after exercise Neptune Strike 25-2 alongside NATO Allies. This is her second deployment, but the very first visit in France, as the first one had been canceled in October 2023, following the terrorist strike in Israel.

Ship tours during this second scheduled visit to France were unfortunately reserved for the media, and the members of our Squadron did not have the chance to board this new flagship of the US Navy. The only possibility many of our members had to observe this brand new ship of her class was from far away, even if the arrival of an aircraft carrier is always a very noticeable big event that never goes unnoticed.

While in port, crews and embarked personnel participated in tours of Marseille, Paris, and Monaco, but ANA French Crusaders Squadron members were unfortunately not able to host a dinner ashore, as we have in the past.

As CO of the French Crusaders ANA Squadron since 1992, I did not have the pleasure to go onboard with my fellow Squadron members during this recent port visit, but I was lucky to be able to go onboard as part of a Media Tour, and shared pictures with Squadron members and *Wings of Gold* readers.

The last time ANA French Crusaders Squadron members were able to go onboard an aircraft carrier

SQUADRON NEWS

was during the USS Harry S. Truman (CVN-75) port visit in 2008, where we had great moments during the tour and shared our traditional welcome dinner in a restaurant in Marseille. I still have the "CO Coin" from Sarah Joyner, former VFA-105 Commanding Officer, as a souvenir of that visit, and remember the old good times, visiting Ready Rooms, having time to talk with pilots, and preparing visits in Marseille.

Warmest thanks to PAO LCDR Ada Willis, our good and patient guide during the Media Tour, and to the U.S. Consulate in Marseille for making it possible. We hope to renew traditions with our "French hospitality" for the next time.



USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78) PAO LCDR Ada Willis addresses the Media Tour (photo by Jean-Michel Maurel)

San Francisco Bay Area Squadron (San Francisco, CA)

update & photo submitted by Tom Spink, San Francisco Bay Area Squadron CO and ANA Western Region Commodore

Recently, the San Francisco Bay Area ANA Squadron and the Bay Area Tailhook Ready Room hosted CAPT George Dom, USN (Ret) as their guest speaker aboard the USS Hornet Museum. Captain Dom has an extensive record as a Naval Aviator; with service in multiple F/A-18 Squadrons, as a TOPGUN instructor, as an operational F/A-18 Squadron CO, as Commanding Officer of the Navy's Flight Demonstration Team, the "Blue Angels", and as Wing Commander on USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) and USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67). He has logged over 5,000 hours in Navy jets and more than 1,000 carrier landings.

He spoke about the "Five Pillars of Trust" in his book, *High Trust Leadership*. They are: *Character* - "Do you walk your talk?", *Commitment* - "Will you be with us when the times are tough?", *Competence* - "Are you skilled and relevant?', *Connection* - "Do you understand me?", and *Communication* - "Can I understand you?".

In his book, George dives deep into each of these principles, with numerous examples of good and bad performance - the result of demanding the best from every member of the team is the pursuit of excellence. But what makes the excellence displayed by the "Blue Angels" even more amazing is the fact that there is a 50% annual turnover among the 16 Officers, and a 33% turnover among the 109 Enlisted personnel.

The "Blue Angels" go from winter training right into a 35-city

SQUADRON NEWS

San Francisco Bay Area Squadron, cont. (San Francisco, CA)



CAPT George Dom, USN (Ret) and SF Bay Area Squadron CO, CAPT Tom Spink, USN (Ret) aboard the USS Hornet Museum, at the combined ANA / Bay Area Tailhook Ready Room meeting

tour, with 300 days a year on the road. Their briefs and debriefs are totally honest in order to get better every day. With each week, the level of Trust becomes greater and the maneuvers tighter. During Captain Dom's time as the "Boss", they added two new maneuvers - the *Diamond Landing*, and the *Half-Cuban Eight on Takeoff* - and they did it safely, with zero mishaps. Captain Dom pointed out that many of the team went on to distinguished Navy and Marine careers, making a positive impact everywhere they went. Others transitioned to successful civilian careers and became leaders in their communities. He summed up his time with the "Blues" with these thoughts: "We were ordinary people dedicated to an uncompromising value of trustworthiness that led to extraordinary accomplishments."

After his presentation, Captain Dom showed videos of when the "Blue Angels" flew over a San Francisco 49er game on Sunday, October 12, 1997. I was the MC at the Friday evening welcoming reception for the "Blue Angels" hosted by the San Francisco ANA Squadron that year, and the idea of flying over the stadium during the fourth quarter was discussed. Skipper Dom figured the odds that the FAA would approve such a maneuver with only two days' notice at zero. He also figured the 49ers would not like the possibility that the flyover might happen during a critical play. But on Sunday morning, the PAO told Skipper Dom that everything had been approved. So, the "Boss" started calculating how to get to Candlestick Park after they exited their scheduled performance on San Francisco's waterfront.

I was at the 49er game that day, and told everyone around me that it might happen, but of course they didn't believe me. In the distance, I could see the "Blues" making some of their high maneuvers, and I knew they were close to the end of their performance. I looked for them over the east side of the stadium but did not see them. Then there was a huge cheer, as folks on the north side saw them approach. The "Blue Angels" formation flew directly over the flags without any daylight between them. The game stopped, and the crowd went wild. The folks around me gave me some looks I will never forget. One even said it was the most impressive thing they had ever seen. John Madden was one of the announcers, and he went nuts. John didn't like airplane travel, but at the end of the season, he voted the "Blue Angel" San Francisco flyover as his MVP for the year's greatest plays.

SQUADRON NEWS

Cape Fear Seahawk Squadron (Wilmington, NC)

update & photo submitted by Seahawk Squadron XO CDR Ken Klassen, USN (Ret)

The Seahawk Squadron meets monthly at the Hieronymus Seafood Restaurant & Oyster Bar, a local seafood restaurant in Wilmington, NC that has been our watering hole for over 20 years. The owners are enthusiastic supporters of Naval Aviation; they even allow us to display naval aircraft pictures permanently in the private dining area we use for a luncheon and programs. Our membership growth is encouraging with numerous new aviation enthusiasts joining recently. We have over 70 members, and about 35-40 attend luncheon meetings. Interesting speakers, great seafood at a fair price, special events during the end of year holidays with spouses, a summer picnic with spouses at a member's scenic home on the Intracoastal Waterway, plus active recruitment by Seahawk members, have added new members each month. At the August meeting, Ed Bellini, our Membership Chair, introduced a special young man and his father as new members of the Seahawk Squadron. Their names are Luke Frank, and his son Sammy, age 12, who is our youngest member ever. According to his father, Sammy loves technical endeavors, and he completed the LEGO *Concorde* at age 10 in less than a day when the suggested time was 2-4 days. Sammy loves military aircraft, and has even quizzed Ed Bellini on the specifications of Mig-29s. With his dad, Luke, as the Pilot in Command, Sammy has flown over 90 hours in the *Cirrus* SR20, Piper *Meridian* M600 and Pilatus PC-12.

Luke Frank retired from the Marine Corps in 2022 after an active career in Marine Aviation that included the CH-53D *Super Stallion*, CH-53K *King Stallion*, CH-46E *Sea Knight*, and Presidential Duty with Marine Helicopter Squadron One (HMX-1), flying the VH-3D *Sea King* and VH-60N *White Hawk*. Luke's callsign in the Marines was "Amber Alert". His new career includes a NAVAIR contract with the Israeli Air Force, plus flying as a Pilatus PC-12 corporate pilot. Luke's numerous civilian pilot qualifications include CFII, MEI and ATP. They live in Sneads Ferry, NC.

The program for August 2025 was formatted around squadron members giving us background on their "call sign" along with a sea story or two. That brought on some lively interaction, and responses that typically begin with "There I was, faced with an event not of my choosing, and this is no bologna". We heard tales from young and old; one not even a teenager, and others in their 90s. It was very entertaining, with an emphasis on lessons learned and the importance of sharing stories with others. Memories are priceless!



Pilot in Command Luke Frank and his Copilot son, Sammy, inside the Pilatus PC-12 cockpit (photo by Luke Frank)

SQUADRON NEWS

Hampton Roads Squadron (Virginia Beach, Virginia)

update & photo submitted by Harry Gerwein



ANA Hampton Roads Squadron members at the Flight Line Chalet

AIR SHOW

The theme of this year's Naval Air Station Oceana Air Show, held from 20-21 Sept in Virginia Beach, VA, was "Celebrating 250 Years of America's Navy".

ANA Hampton Roads Squadron once again provided a Flight Line Chalet that gave their members and guests a center point, front row position in which to watch the show, with Mission Barbecue supplying a great lunch! ANA Hampton Roads Squadron CO, Captain Kenny Golden, USN (Ret), Commander Bob Foster, USN (Ret), and Commander Carroll Baines, USN (Ret) were the major workhorses in making this happen.

This year's airshow line up included the U.S. Navy "Blue Angels", the F-22 *Raptor* Demonstration team, the F/A-18F *Rhino* Demo Team from the VFA-106 "Gladiators", an F-35C *Lightning II* from the VFA-125 "Rough Raiders", and a Coast Guard C-130 *Hercules*.

In addition, many civilian acts shared the legacy of the past and memories of the times of barnstorming. One such act was "Wing Walker Sam" with the bi-wing Grumman Airshow *Cat*.

Naval Air Station Oceana hosted its first airshow in 1953. The planners of that air show could not have imagined some of the technology of 72-years in the future, but the spirit of performers and the enthusiasm of the audience spans the decades!

FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS

Ronald H. Jesberg, Rear Admiral, USN (Ret) died peacefully at his home in Virginia Beach on August 11, 2025. He was 89. Ron served his country as a distinguished Naval Aviator, Combat Veteran, and Flag Officer.

Ron's career path led him to the "rotor wing" community of Naval Aviation, with decades of flying several different helicopters on many different missions. In 1971, Ron volunteered for duty with the Helicopter Attack Squadron (Light) 3 (HAL-3) "Seawolves" in Bien Thuy, Vietnam, flying hundreds of combat missions until the squadron was decommissioned in March 1972.

During his career he also served with the HS-1 "Seahorses", and was Executive Officer, and then Commanding Officer of the HS-7 "Dusty Dogs".

After a short tour at Helicopter Antisubmarine Wing 1, he reported to USS Guam (LPH-9) as Air Officer in 1977, and in March 1978 he reported to HSL-30 "Neptune's Horsemen" for refresher training, serving as CO of the Fleet Replacement Squadron from July 1978 to June 1980.

In March 1982, he assumed Command of USS Guam (LPH-9)

SQUADRON NEWS

and deployed to Beirut, Lebanon, where USS Guam evacuated American citizens. He departed USS Guam in July 1983, and served as Commanding Officer of USS Nassau (LHA-4) from August 1983 to March 1985. Throughout his naval career, Rear Admiral Jesberg logged 4,690 flight hours, made 1,639 ship/carrier landings, and flew 428 combat missions.

These chronological accomplishments are great, but the man that Rear Admiral Jesberg was, was far more. He was a loving husband and father to his three children, and a loving grandfather to his five grandkids.

During his time on earth, Ron met and influenced thousands of his fellow Sailors and neighbors.

Chicago Squadron (Chicago, Illinois)

update & photo submitted by Paul Jenkins, Chicago Squadron CO

There are a lot of great things about Chicago in the summer—warm weather, the Cubs and Sox, the beaches, and the fabulous outdoor dining scene. But one of the real perks is being near Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD), the closest major airport to the annual EAA Fly-In at Oshkosh. Every year there is an all-star lineup of Naval Aviators who stop by on the way through the Windy before heading up to the big fly-in.

Hard to find a bigger star in my view than Kent Ewing, the skipper of USS America during the Gulf War. An aviator and leader of renown both in and out of the Navy. You can watch the video of his deadstick landing of a crippled *Bonanza* on Thanksgiving morning, more than a decade ago at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edOHWN_L6V8&ab_channel=KentEwing*.

I was aboard America under Captain Ewing and hadn't seen him in 30 years. He is as formidable as ever, and getting together on his way up north was one of this summer's highlights.



Chicago Squadron CO Paul Jenkins and CAPT Kent Ewing, USN (Ret) outside the world-famous Mad Rooster Cafe in Kenosha, Wisconsin

SQUADRON NEWS

Silver Ospreys Squadron (Sun City Center, Florida)

update & photo submitted by Tom Harding, Silver Ospreys Squadron CO



CAPT RT Davis, USN (Ret); Guest Speaker CAPT Nick Barone, USN (Ret); and RADM Larry Chambers, USN (Ret), all former Attack pilots

The Silver Ospreys Squadron #64 of the Association of Naval Aviation welcomed our speaker for the month of May, Nick Barone, CAPT, USN (Ret). A member of the Silver Ospreys Squadron, Nick received his Wings of Gold in 1980 flying the T-34 *Mentor*, T-2 *Buckeye*, and TA-4 *Skyhawk*. After graduation, Nick received Advanced Flight training assigned to VS-42 at NAS North Island, and later was assigned to VS-32 at NAS Jacksonville, flying the S-3A *Viking*. Following these assignments, Nick transitioned to flying the A-6E *Intruder*, serving on the USS America (CV-66), USS Eisenhower (CVN-69) and USS Lexington (CV-16). Nick presented an in-depth look at the operational history and experience of flying the A-6 *Intruder* aircraft, with a focus on two of its most significant combat deployments: Operation El Dorado Canyon in Libya (1986) and Operation Desert Storm in Iraq (1991). Through this presentation, he explored the *Intruder*'s design, mission profiles, operational challenges, and the stories of the men and women who flew and maintained these iconic aircraft.

The Grumman A-6 *Intruder*, introduced in the early 1960s, was a twinjet, all-weather, medium attack aircraft designed to provide the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps with precise ground-attack capabilities, day or night, in any weather. Renowned for its ruggedness, versatility, and advanced avionics for its era, the *Intruder* became the backbone of carrier-based attack squadrons for decades. With its side-by-side seating for the Pilot and Bombardier/Navigator, and a high payload capacity, the A-6 could deliver a wide range of ordnance, from conventional bombs to precision-guided munitions.

In April 1986, after a series of Libyan-sponsored terrorist attacks, including the bombing of a Berlin discotheque frequented by U.S. servicemembers, President Ronald Reagan ordered a retaliatory strike against military targets in Libya. This mission, code-named Operation El Dorado Canyon, required striking well-defended targets deep in hostile territory, across the Mediterranean.

The A-6 *Intruder* squadrons were at the forefront of the strike force. Launched from U.S. Navy aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean, *Intruders* flew at low altitudes under cover of darkness to avoid Libyan radar and surface-to-air missile defenses.

The strikes achieved their objectives with minimal loss. The A-6's reliability and its crews' proficiency were credited with the success of the operation. The mission validated the need for all-weather, night-attack platforms, and demonstrated the U.S. Navy's global reach.

In January 1991, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, a coalition led by the United States launched Operation Desert Storm to expel Iraqi forces. By

SQUADRON NEWS

this time, the A-6 had evolved to carry precision-guided munitions, laser-guided bombs, and advanced electronic countermeasures. Squadrons operating from carrier decks in the Persian Gulf were tasked with striking a wide array of targets—enemy airfields, command centers, bridges, and armored columns.

Unlike the exclusive night missions over Libya, Desert Storm saw *Intruders* flying both day and night at altitude. A-6s frequently penetrated heavily defended airspace to hit targets well behind enemy lines. Working with EA-6B *Prowlers* and F/A-18 *Hornets*, *Intruders* engaged in suppressing surface-to-air missile batteries and radar sites.

The A-6 *Intruder* was retired from active service in the late 1990s, but its influence endures. Lessons in carrier-based attack, electronic warfare integration, and aircrew training informed the development of the strike platforms that followed.

Veterans of the *Intruder* community continue to share their experiences, inspiring a new generation of Naval Aviators.

Olympic Squadron (Port Ludlow, Washington)

update & photo submitted by RADM Jamie Kelly, USN (Ret), Olympic Squadron CO

The Olympic Squadron is very lucky to be located in an area of Washington state that is home to several Naval installations. We have an air station, submarine base, major ship yard, surface ship home port, and a weapons magazine. We have been very fortunate to have visited each of these facilities.

On 15 August, 14 members of the Olympic Squadron visited Naval Magazine Indian Island, Washington. The visit was arranged between CDR Robert Jameson, the Naval Magazine's new Commanding Officer, and Olympic Squadron CO, RADM (Ret) Jamie Kelly. After a welcoming talk by CDR Jameson and the XO LT Kyrie Slade, we departed on a bus tour conducted by the Naval Magazine's Environmental Officer, Bill Kalina, with security provided by MA2 Jordan Ortiz.

During the tour, Bill was able to utilize his more than 34 years of experience with the Naval Magazine to give us a very interesting history of the 2700 acre island. For over a thousand years, Native American tribes lived, hunted and fought on the island and the surrounding mainland. During the mid-1800s, white settlers began to move into the area. An important and interesting note is that both the tribes and the settlers were able to live peacefully together, and this peaceful co-existence remains today between the tribes and the Navy. As we drove around the island, Bill was able to point to several areas where tribes lived, hunted and gathered. He also showed



Olympic Squadron speaker Dr Kristin "Rosie" Barnes, CDR, USN (Ret)

SQUADRON NEWS

Olympic Squadron, cont. (Port Ludlow, Washington)

us where settlers lived, grazed their livestock, and farmed.

While learning about Indian Island's unique history was interesting, we quickly gained a true appreciation of how critically important the Indian Island Naval Magazine is today to the Navy, the other military services, and to our Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program. Because it is a deepwater port, ships as large as aircraft carriers can and do receive a wide variety of munitions for non-nuclear weapons systems.

Moving through the various Magazine complexes, Bill described how military and civilian personnel receive, store, and load munitions to our surface warships, military supply ships, submarines, and allied freighters.

One very interesting fact that we learned concerning the various weapon's loading requirements is that, while FMS and the other military services require pallet loading, the Army uses containers for its weapons shipping. As a result, the Army owns and the Navy operates a 300 foot, 40 ton crane at the Magazine. These facts were of significant interest to our lone Army attendee.

Our July speaker was Dr, Kristin "Rosie" Barnes, CDR, USN (Ret) a former *Tomcat* RIO and current Naturopathic Doctor and Eastern Asian Medicine Practitioner (EAMP), with insights on many things we should be focused on as we age, and with many great thoughts regarding PTSD and related issues!

Kristin is a 1992 USNA grad, with a 23-year career as a Naval Aviator and leader, including 3000+ flight hours, 700+ traps, and seven deployments in support of combat in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq. She wrapped up her USN time in 2015, and then became a Doctor of Medical Operations, with a Degree in Nutrition and Certificate in Psychedelic Assisted Therapy through the Integrated Psychiatry Institute of Boulder, CO. And she also "gives back" via the No Fallen Heroes Foundation. If you've got medical issues, check in with her! Her bio is at *https://meridianpassagewellness.com/bio/*.

Any ANAers in the Port Ludlow, WA area on the 3rd Tuesdays of the month are most welcome to join us - contact me at *jdkelly73@gmail.com*.

Flying Beavers Squadron (Portland, Oregon)

update & photo submitted by Peter Young, Flying Beavers Squadron CO

The Flying Beavers Squadron of Oregon and SW Washington gathered in June for an enjoyable informal "show and tell" meeting at their customary spot at American Legion Post 150 in Clackamas, Oregon. Members brought souvenirs of their service and talked about the personal and professional significance of each.

Notable mementos included a vintage Australian Air Force slouch hat (obtained in a barter by Randy "Ram" Beyers) and an authentic Cubi O'Club dice cup, which was in play during the meeting to teach Maj Beyers the fundamentals of "Horse" and "Liars Dice". Squadron official "scrounger" Joel Hernandez brought an array of Naval Aviation artifacts discovered during his regular reconnaissance patrols of area thrift shops and antique barns, including a carved plaque from an HC-5 Detachment, and an early steering wheel from a S-2F "Stoof".

A highlight was a portfolio of color photographs taken in late 1968 by Jack LaBounty while stationed as a Navy E-5 on Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i. At the time, the Ford Island airfield was being used as a set for scenes being filmed for the motion Picture *Tora! Tora! Tora!*. Both flying models and mock-ups of period aircraft were on site.

In other community outreach activities, Squadron members

SQUADRON NEWS

participated in several "honor by listening" events at Portland area high schools, where we joined Veterans of every conflict, from World War II to Afghanistan, in talking to students about our military service.

Our regional Coast Guard aviation units had a busy summer, responding to multiple distress calls from the treacherous waters off the Washington and Oregon coastlines. August was a particularly busy month, highlighted by two coordinated helicopter rescue operations.

U.S. Coast Guard and Royal Canadian Air Force medevac'd multiple passengers from a cruise ship off the Washington coast. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and Canadian Coast Guard successfully coordinated two separate medical evacuations from the cruise ship Ruby Princess, approximately 145 nautical miles west of Cape Flattery, Washington on Sunday, August 24.

On Sunday morning, Coast Guard Northwest District watchstanders received notification from the cruise ship Ruby Princess that a 52-year-old female passenger who had suffered sudden cardiac arrest, and a 99-year-old male passenger suffering from complete esophageal obstruction, required immediate medical evacuations.

The operation involved simultaneous rescue efforts coordinated between Canadian and U.S. assets, including a CH-149 *Cormorant* helicopter and CC-295 *Kingfisher* aircraft from RCAF 19 Wing Comox, and a MH-65 *Dolphin* helicopter from USCG Air Station Port Angeles.

"This case demonstrates how our specialized expertise and dedicated training allow us to rapidly respond to these types of time-sensitive medical evacuations at sea", said CDR Kelly Higgins, Commanding Officer of U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Port Angeles.

Earlier in the month, Coast Guard air and surface crews from across two districts worked together to assist three mariners aboard a disabled fishing vessel approximately 95 miles west of Newport, Oregon.

Watchstanders at Coast Guard Sector Columbia River and Coast Guard Northwest District coordinated with Coast Guard Pacific Area to dispatch a C-27 *Spartan* aircrew from Air Station Sacramento, and a MH-65 *Dolphin* aircrew from Air Station North Bend, Oregon to provide fresh drinking water, a radio, and a dewatering pump to the vessel. Further support was provided by the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Alder (WLB-216), a seagoing buoy tender based in San Francisco.

"This mission showcased the Coast Guard's ability to bring together crews, cutters, and aircraft from multiple commands to help mariners in need," said LCDR Tahnee Zaccano, Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator at the Northwest District command center in Seattle.



Flying Beavers Squadron member Jack LaBounty on Ford Island, Hawai'i with one of the flying P-40 aircraft used in the filming of Tora! Tora! Tora! in 1969 (photo courtesy Jack LaBounty)

SQUADRON NEWS

Pax River Squadron (Patuxent River, Maryland)

update & photos submitted by Sam "Messy" Messer, ANA Patuxent River Squadron CO



Cadet LT Alicia Martin receives her certificate from Sam Messer, Pax River ANA CO (photo by CAPT David Randle, USN (Ret)

Awards Season in Pax River

The Pax River ANA Chapter sponsors annual awards that are presented to deserving high school and college students through four programs.

First, the Great Mills High School Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) held their awards ceremony on May 8, 2025. This year, Cadet LT Alicia Martin was selected for the Student Leadership Award, which goes to a Freshman or Sophomore who demonstrates outstanding leadership and potential.

We wish fair winds and following seas to Captain David "Pookie" Randle, USN (Ret), who has led the Great Mills NJROTC program for many years. His steady hand and commitment to the youth in our community will be missed, and we wish him the best in retirement.

The next two awards went to deserving college graduates in the area who will be headed to Pensacola. Both are from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Midshipman Adam Loomis was selected, as he was a standout student in both academics and physical fitness while making the time to mentor underclassmen. MIDN Loomis will enter the NFO pipeline, and has his eyes set on either P-8s or *Growlers*. Midshipman Paul Cornett, was recognized for his academic performance and for being an integral part of the ROTC Battalion's leadership development program while serving as Training Officer and in 4/C development. Both of his parents were Navy pilots, and he's excited to join their ranks after completing flight training.



MIDN Adam Loomis at the controls during CORTRAMID (photo by LT Sarah Hansen)

SQUADRON NEWS



MIDN Paul Cornett next to one of his parent's platforms (photo by LT Beau Cisneros)

Finally, ANA sponsors an annual scholarship awarded in conjunction with the Business, Education, and Community Alliance, Inc. (BECA), a local non-profit that helps connect local benefactors with graduating High School Seniors in St. Mary's County. This year, Pax River ANA awarded Ms. Alyssa Black with a $1500 scholarship, presented at the BECA Awards Ceremony held at the University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland. Ms. Black plans to apply the scholarship towards her college education at Liberty University, where she will join their aviation program. The Pax River ANA Chapter thanks BECA for their commitment to the youth of our community and is proud to be a part of this rewarding program.



BECA ANA scholarship awardee Ms. Alyssa Black with Sam Messer, Pax River ANA CO (photo courtesy Sam Messer)

Peregrine Squadron (Boise, Idaho)

update submitted by Steve Jacobsmeyer, Peregrine Squadron CO

As we commemorate the Association of Naval Aviation's 50th Anniversary, Peregrine Squadron of Boise, Idaho, is celebrating its own 24 years since being commissioned. We are proud of the nearly 125 Navy and Marine Aviators, Naval Flight Officers, and Aircrewmen, as well as Coast Guard, Air Force, and Air National Guard aviators who have joined the squadron since its inception. And while not all of them actively participate in our monthly meetings, it's notable that of the original 27 plankowners, more than 15 remain on the squadron's roster. Peregrine Squadron continues to offer a free lunch and an entertaining get-together to any ANA member(s) who happen to be in Boise on the third Wednesday of the month. Please don't hesitate to contact us at *peregrinesquadron@gmail.com* if you plan to be in the area.

Apologies are in order to Mr. Leo Hellyer and Peregrine Squadron member Dennis Ellison for not highlighting their excellent presentations at recent meetings. Leo spoke to the group in April about his Air Force career, which included 10

SQUADRON NEWS

Peregrine Squadron, cont. (Boise, Idaho)

years serving as a B-52 tail gunner, and his second career working with the Veterans Ministry Program at the River of Life Men's Shelter in Boise. In May, Dennis presented an informative brief on Arctic Operations, in general, and more specifically on his own experiences participating in ICEX '88 out of Thule Air Base in Greenland. Our thanks to both speakers for their efforts.

In June, Ike Sweesy, Flight Captain from "Gunfighter Flight 93", the Boise chapter of the Order of Daedalians, was the guest speaker for our meeting. He spoke to us on three subjects: his career, the Order of Daedalians, and Operation Military Blessings.

During Ike's 21-year flying career after graduation from the United States Air Force Academy in 1971, his first operational assignment was in the F-4 *Phantom*, flying combat missions out of Thailand during the final years of the Vietnam War. Later, during Desert Storm, Ike flew 34 combat missions, to include providing jamming support to the F-117s in the first mission into Baghdad. Ike retired from the Air Force in 1992.

Ike spoke about the Order of Daedalians, a non-profit organization officially founded in 1934 to, among other objectives, educate Americans on the advantages of air and space power and to promote the rewards of a career in military aviation to young Americans through scholarships and other means. An international organization, the Daedalians offer membership to rated aviators from all of the military services, including those from the Air Force, Navy, Army, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marines. Ike invited all of us to join the "Gunfighter Flight" at any of their monthly dinners.

Peregrine Squadron held its annual "Hawaiian Shirt Day" meeting on 16 July at Elmer's Kitchen with 15 squadron members in attendance.

Retired Navy Captain, and new Peregrine Squadron member, Mike McKenna volunteered to speak at this month's meeting. Accompanied by his wife, Katie, he presented an interesting, retrospective glimpse into his distinguished 28-year career flying A-6E *Intruders* and EA-6B *Prowlers*, including service as Commanding Officer of the VAQ-141 "Shadowhawks", flying the EA-6B *Prowler*, deploying on USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71), supporting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mike talked about spending one of his last days in command launching squadron aircraft with his Sailors on the Flight Deck. He said that he reminded himself just how dangerous it is on the Flight Deck during operations. It is worth noting that Mike was awarded the 2008 RADM Don Quinn Award for Leadership in the Electronic Attack community.

As he had done throughout his brief, Mike's final slides focused on his family, notably his and Katie's daughters, Emma and Megan. Though neither have entirely followed in his footsteps, both gained military experience through participation in JROTC and Army ROTC. Mike's exceptional and personal brief was very well received by the squadron, who offered their appreciation through applause and compliments.

Peregrine Squadron held its monthly meeting on 20 August at Elmer's Kitchen in Boise, ID, attended by 12 squadron members and two guests, Annette Cavalieri and Linda Slupe.

With the scheduled guest speaker scrubbed at the last minute due to a family issue, the floor was opened to any member who wanted to speak. Taking the opportunity to speak on a subject relevant to most of the members, XO Cavalieri described his personal experience with a fire that had recently burned in close proximity to his home, which is located in a mostly rural area south of the Boise airport. The fire would eventually grow to 27,000 acres by the next afternoon. The XO said his main lesson learned was everyone needs to have a plan in place in the event of such an emergency.

SQUADRON NEWS

Our guest speaker for the September meeting was retired Army helicopter pilot Tom Horner, who had a 22-year long career in Army aviation, including service in Vietnam, where he was assigned to the 114th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC), made up of three platoons: the "White Knights", "Red Knights", and "Cobras", where he flew UH-1 *Hueys* as one of the "White Knights". Tom laid out some of the various missions he performed during his first tour, from June 1968 to June 1969. Among them, he would put troops on the ground, pull troops out under fire, and work with Special Forces. Tom concluded his career in the Army to embark on a second, even-longer career, flying BK-117s for Health Lifeline, conducting Emergency Medical Services in support of Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis.

Tom spoke in some detail about the importance of Night Vision Goggle (NVG) use for EMS. He compared the unwieldy NVG devices he used in the Army to the more technologically advanced models being incorporated into the civilian EMS domain. Though there was initial trepidation to employing them, Tom said confidence has grown with increased FAA involvement and oversight. Tom finished his presentation talking about some of his interests he enjoys in retirement, such as helping a buddy build a Vans RV-10, hunting, woodworking, and working as a Volunteer Firefighter.

Rocket City Squadron (Huntsville, Alabama)

submitted by the ANA Rocket City Squadron

Forging the Rocket City Squadron

When retired Navy Captain James "Cooter" Carver moved to the "Rocket City" (AKA Huntsville, Alabama) to work for COLSA Corporation, he resolved to bring Naval Aviator culture with him. As part of his Business Development work, he kept running into former or retired aviators like himself, and he began to wonder if he could create more opportunities for them to connect.

He decided to contact one of his colleagues from his last duty station, PAX River Squadron CO, Mark



Recent Rocket City Squadron gathering at the The Brewers Cooperative, Huntsville, AL (photo courtesy CAPT James "Cooter" Carver, USN (Ret)

SQUADRON NEWS

Rocket City Squadron, cont. (Huntsville, AL)

"Stick" Converse, who helped with the organizing effort and who passed along a current roster, showing ANA members residing in the local area. Carver then reached out to see if they would be interested in forming a new, Huntsville-based ANA Chapter. That's how the Rocket City Squadron was created.

The Rocket City Squadron is now a vibrant association of former Navy and Marine Corps Aviators – encompassing both fixed wing and rotary wing aviators – dedicated to camaraderie, service, and preserving the legacy of Naval Aviation. Formed by those who have hung up their flight suits but haven't lost their passion for the Fleet, the Squadron's core purpose is twofold: to provide a supportive network for aviators transitioning to civilian life, and to actively contribute to the community. Meetings aren't just about sea stories - though there's plenty of that - but more about leveraging the skills and experience gained during a career of service to make a positive impact locally. It's a place where shared experiences forge lasting bonds and a continued sense of purpose.

Since its formation in 2022, the Rocket City Squadron now boasts around 50 members. From the first meeting at SiP Fine Spirits & Cigar Lounge, attendance has grown from around six, to over 30. Members meet regularly at local restaurants and bars like Stella's Elixir Lounge, Prohibition, Salt Factory, Back Forty, Straight to Ale, and Furniture Factory, which contributes to the local economy. The Squadron welcomes Marine Corps Aviators and non-aviators to join to increase engagement, networking opportunities, and collaboration.

Huntsville, AL is home to Redstone Arsenal, U.S. Space & Rocket Center, FBI headquarters, NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, Missile Defense Agency, and soon, the United States Space Force (USSF). Carver aims to also start a Navy League Huntsville Chapter, so that along with the ANA Rocket City Squadron, he can continue to provide support for the growing community of retired Navy professionals in the area.

Plans for Growth & Giving Back

Looking ahead to the next five years, the Rocket City Squadron aims to expand its community outreach and solidify its role as a resource for both Veterans and the local community. Specifically, the Squadron will participate in activities like establishing a formal mentorship program for transitioning service members, partnering with local schools to promote STEM education (particularly aviation-focused fields), and potentially volunteering in the local community.

To benefit the parent organizations, Carver plans to organize charity events to raise donations for both ANA and the Navy League to provide college scholarships for families of former Navy members.

How to Join the Rocket City Squadron

For former Navy, Marine Corps or Coast Guard aviators, joining the Rocket City Squadron offers invaluable benefits. Beyond the obvious social connections with individuals who understand the unique challenges and rewards of aviation, the Squadron provides opportunities for continued growth and fulfillment. It's a chance to stay connected to a lifestyle you loved, share hard-won wisdom with the next generation, and avoid the isolation that can sometimes accompany transition from service.

Captain James Carver, USN (Ret), ANA Rocket City Squadron CO

James "Cooter" Carver enlisted in the Navy in 1988 but always dreamed of flying. He attended college in his off-time and earned an Associate's Degree before applying to the Enlisted Commissioning Program (ECP). Through this program, Carver earned his Bachelor's Degree and his spot in flight training. Following flight school, his career began with a Junior Officer Tour in an EA-6B Prowler Squadron (VAQ-142) followed by U.S. Naval Test Pilot School (Class 129), a tour at VX-23 as a Project Officer, a Department Head tour in an EA-6B Squadron (VAQ-139), Joint duty at USSOCOM, and then back to VX-23 as the Chief Test Pilot and Commanding Officer. "Cooter" actively flew aircraft from April 1999-April 2017. He's most proud that he came up through the ranks, from an E-1 (Seaman Recruit) all the way to O-6 (Captain).

SQUADRON NEWS

Eldorado Squadron (Memphis, Tennessee)

update & photo submitted by John Mullis, Eldorado Squadron CO

The Memphis Eldorado Squadron #12 hosted two former "Blue Angels" pilots at our June 11 meeting - Commander Mark "Utah" Provo, "Blue Angel" #5, and Commander Chip Boogerd, "Blue Angel" #3 and #4, who gave a great presentation about their individual tours.

Details covering their selection process, training, and air show performances kept our group of over forty entranced for about an hour. Both pilots still fly for FedEx in their post-Navy careers. Mark flew with the "Blues" from 1996-1998, and he is a published author of the book, *The Passdown Log-Secrets to a Successful Life from a Blue Angels Pilot*, and article, "Lessons From Out of The Blues" published in the *U.S. Navy Proceedings Magazine*. He also assisted in the production of the iMax film *The Magic of Flight*, which featured segments of the 1996 "Blue Angels" team performances, in which he was flying as the #5 Opposing Solo. Chip flew #3 and #4 Left Wing and Slot in the Diamond Formation from 1999-2001. Together, these gents gave a well-rounded look at the "Blue Angels" team from the Diamond and Solo perspectives, and it was fascinating. They were typically on the road for over 300 days a year. They both said that it was the most intense flying that they had ever done, including combat.

There are a lot of lessons learned from their tours, but the biggest takeaway seemed to be the importance of team work and admitting their performance mistakes. "Despite their healthy egos, these men all came clean on every *faux pas* that occurred on their flights," Mark noted.



Young John Parker Mullis with guest speaker and former "Blue Angels" pilot Mark Provo

As Naval Aviators, we all respect the honed skills of the "Blue Angels" and are always extremely proud that they represent the Navy so vividly. It was an honor and a delight to host these two fine men. With a few young folks attending, both pilots were still happy to provide autographs…planting seeds for future Naval Aviators.

SQUADRON NEWS

McCampbell's Aces Squadron - Detachment Guam
(Guam, Western Pacific)

update & photos submitted by Captain and Mrs. Iain A. Currie



CDR Paul Tatora, USN, holds the wreath at the Annual Maritime Remembrance Day Ceremony, with CAPT Iain Currie standing to the far right (photo courtesy Iain Currie)

Detachment Guam has had a busy summer schedule, with events also attended by members of the Elks, American Legion, Navy League, and Boy Scouts.

On May 15, Joint Task Force Micronesia Change of Command took place just outside the expanding Camp Blaz as Navy SEAL RADM (Select) Joshua Lasky relieved Naval Aviator RADM (Select) Greg Huffman. Lt Gen Joshua Rudd, U.S. Army, Deputy Commander U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, was guest speaker, and Guam Governor Lourdes Leon Guerrero was also in attendance. Saipan Governor Arnold Palacios, who unfortunately passed away in July 23, flew in for the event, too. We wish him fair winds and following seas.

On May 22, CAPT Currie and his wife Dubhe launched aboard a Coast Guard 45-foot Response Boat - Medium (RB-M) into Apra Harbor for the Annual Maritime Remembrance Ceremony, with ceremonial wreath laying and playing of "Taps" over the local waters. Navy CDR Paul Tatora presided, along with Coast Guard CAPT Jessica Worst for the touching and emotional ceremony. Dubhe Currie's father was lost aboard the M/V Testarosa during a massive storm off France in 1987.

On May 26, Memorial Day services were held at Veterans Cemetery, Piti, Guam. Numerous Veteran groups were in attendance and participated in the moving wreath dedications.

On May 29, at the Commander Joint Region Marianas (JRM) Change of Command, Naval Aviator/ NFO RDML Brett Mietus relieved RDML Brent DeVore, a Surface Warfare Officer, as VADM Scott Gray, Commander, Navy Installations Command, presided. The event took place in the gym of Guam High School, located on Base by the Navy Hospital. Governor Leon Guerrero was in attendance, and reminded the audience of how Navy personnel did a Titan's amount of work to recover all Navy and island facilities from the devastation of Typhoon Mawar in May 2023.

SQUADRON NEWS

On June 26, at Coast Guard Base Guam Change of Command Ceremony, CDR Abigail Clark relieved CDR Dana Hiatt at the Navy Base Guam theater. Coast Guard Captain Todd Wimmer flew in from Base Honolulu, to preside. Governor Leon Guerrero sat in the front row, center. CDR Hiatt was the first Commanding Officer of USCG Base Guam, standing up the unit and moving into a new Headquarters.

On July 17, during the Marine Corps Camp Blaz Change of Command, Colonel Richard D. Marshall, Jr. relieved Colonel Ernest Govea during a precision-oriented ceremony conducted in Marine Corps style. Tinian Mayor Edwin P. Aldan was in attendance and was given special recognition for his residence's participation in the expanding Marine presence on their island.

In August, the Coast Guard Birthday Ball at the Dusit Thani Resort was a gala event, held in a festive atmosphere with a delicious buffet and traditional toasts. The event hosted many dignitaries, including Congressman James Moylan, Governor Lou Leon Guerrero, and Rear Admiral Brett Mietus.



Lio Currie at Invasion Beach flag field, Memorial Day, May 26 (photo courtesy Iain Currie)

McCampbell's Aces Squadron (Greater Palm Beach, FL)

submitted by Charles Stark, McCampbell's Aces Squadron CO



Recent McCampbell's Aces Squadron gathering at the Waterway Café, Palm Beach, FL (photo courtesy Squadron CO Charles Stark)

ANA Log Book

In Memoriam

RADM Thomas Cassidy, USN (Ret)
LCDR Gordon Lamb, USN (Ret)
CDR Lawrence Thompson, USN (Ret)

New Members

CAPT James Allen, USN (Ret)
LT William Brady, USN (Ret)
Mr. Ken Campbell
Mr. George Cannelos
LCDR Edward Carney, USN (Ret)
LT Hayden Cooksy, USN
LTJG Zach Coton, USN
CDR Michael Crosby, USN (Ret)
Mr. Dudley Crosson
AWCM William Cunningham, USN (Ret)
Ms. Allyson Darroch
LT David Didier, USN
CAPT David Echevarria, USN (Ret)
CDR Jake Ellzey, USN (Ret)
Mr. Roberto Farfan
CDR Scott Fenning, USN (Ret)
Mr. Ian Scott-Fraser
LT James Gall, USN (Ret)
CDR Sali Gear, USN (Ret)
LCDR William Greenwald, USN (Ret)
CDR Darcy Guyant, USCG (Ret)
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Mr. Daniel Lambert
Mr. Michael Little
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CDR Shannon Seay, USN (Ret)
CAPT George Sheldon, Jr., USN (Ret)
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Mr. Charles Waters
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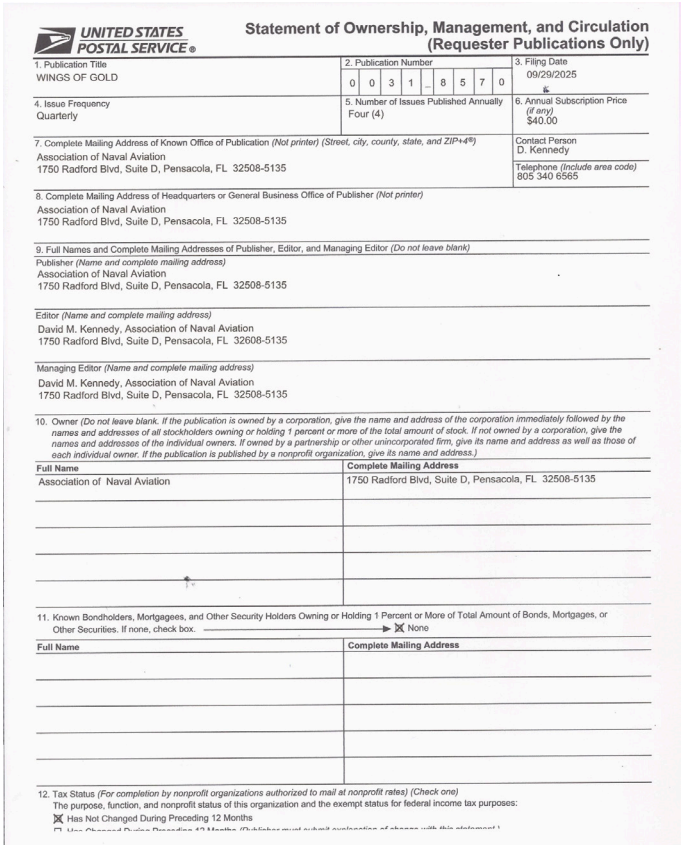
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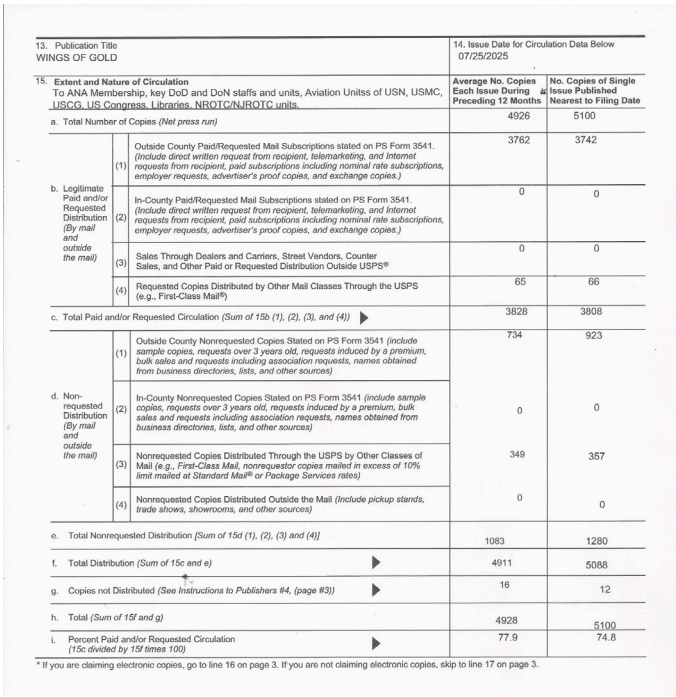
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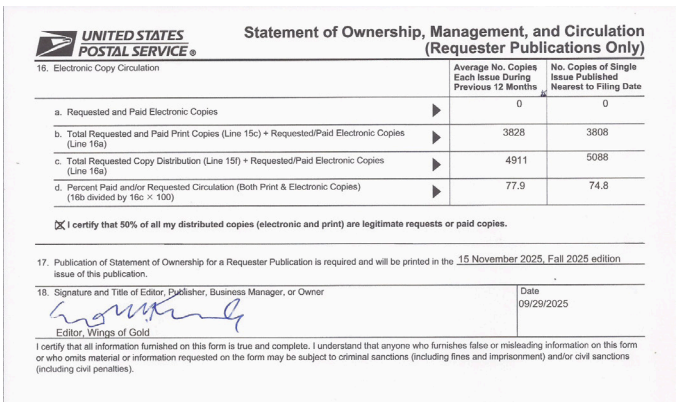
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