

do all the things I planned to do when you were old enough to go to school.

"I thought how nice it would be to come home early in the afternoon and play ball with you and go mountain climbing and see the trees and brooks, and learn all about woodcraft, hunting, fishing, swimming and other things like that. I suppose we must be brave and put these things off now for a while.

"When you are a little bigger you will know why your daddy is not home so much any more. You know we have a big country and we have ideas as to how people should live and enjoy the riches of it and how each is born with equal rights to life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness. Unfortunately there are some countries in the world where they do not have these ideas, where a boy cannot grow up to be what he wants to be with no limit on his opportunities to be a great man such as a great priest, statesman, doctor, soldier, businessman, etc.

"Because there are people in countries who want to change our nation, its ideals, its form of government and way of life, we must leave our homes and families to fight. Fighting for the defense of our country, ideals, homes and honor is an honor and a duty which your daddy has to do before he can come home and settle down with you and mother. When it is done he is coming home to be with you always and forever. So wait just a little while longer. I am afraid it will be more than the two weeks you told me on the phone.

"In the meantime take good care of mother, be a good boy and grow up to be a good young man. Study hard when you go to school. Be a leader in everything good in life. Be a good Catholic and you can't help being a good American. Play fair always. Strive to win but if you lose, lose like a gentlemen and a good sportsman.

"Don't ever be a quitter, either in sports or in your business or profession when you grow up. Get all the education you can. Stay close to Mother and follow her advice. Obey her in everything, no matter how you may at times disagree. She knows what is best and will never let you down or lead you away from the right and honorable things of life.

"If I don't get back, you will have to be Mother's protector because you will be the only one she has. You must grow up to take my place as well as your own in her life and heart.

"Love your grandmother and grandad as long as they live. They, too, will never let you down. Love your aunts and see them as often as you can. Last of all, don't ever forget your daddy. Pray for him to come back and, if it is God's will that he does not, be the kind of a boy and man your daddy wants you to be.

"Kiss Mother for me every night. Goodbye for now.

"With all my love and devotion for Mother and you.

Your Daddy"  
LINE SPACE

While perhaps a bit maudlin for readers 45 years later, Shea's letter was typical of similar pieces of correspondence many fathers wrote to their families showing the emotions of being separated and going into battle.

The letter also gives a good feeling for the commitment many reservists felt during their period of active service. The airfield at NAS South Weymouth, descendant of NRAB Squantum, is named in honor of Jack Shea.

NAS Anacostia, in Washington, D.C., also contributed to the war effort. New buildings were constructed and in 1942, and the Photographic Science Laboratory, now known as the Naval Imaging Command, moved into its new \$4 million facilities. A new aviation unit, the Aircraft Experimental and Development Squadron, was formed and based at Anacostia. Its function was to experiment with aerial tactics. During 1943, the Tactical Air Intelligence Center moved from Philadelphia to Anacostia to evaluate captured Japanese equipment.

The WAVES — Women Accepted for Voluntary Enlisted Service — first came to Anacostia in January 1943, and various other administrative and developmental facilities took up residence there as well.

World War II provided the first chance in 20 years for complete integration of the reserve forces. Certainly the overwhelming victory over the axis powers — Japan, Germany and Italy — could not have been obtained without the huge influx of ready reservists, those men already in the reserves in 1941, and the drafted and volunteer reserve personnel who came in after the declaration of war following Pearl Harbor. (There was a measure of friction between the hardened regulars, particularly at the senior levels, who occasionally made little attempt to hide

their contempt for "those reservists." And the feeling was sometimes reciprocated by the reservists. But, on the grander scale, the complete integration of the reserves with the regular forces provided this country with the means to completely defeat the enemy. There could have been no other way.

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## V. Postwar Activities and Korea, The Reserve Show

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After the stunningly complete victory of the Allies in 1945, the winners tried to return to prewar simplicity. War-weary Britain battled with the desires of its population to supply food and clothing. The U.S., while trying to maintain the momentum of the wartime boom economy, was beginning to realize its new role as leader of the free world against the Soviet monolith. And the battered countries of Europe's mainland tried to rebuild. Most of Asia was in ruins, lifeless. It was a hard world immediately following the devastating global war and victory by one side, complete as it was, did not bring a commensurate promise of relief for anyone.

Finally understanding its new found dominance, the U.S. also understood that it would not allow its military forces to completely wind down. Although severe cuts in military spending and construction programs did occur, one area which was addressed was the maintenance of the reserve forces, including the Naval Air Reserve.

The post war plans officers decided that loss of trained reserves would be wasteful and the Naval Air Reserve Training Command was established as the instrument to continue to utilize the manpower in the reserves. Headquarters for the command was established at NAS Glenview, Ill., in November 1945, with formal commissioning ceremonies in July 1946. Rear Admiral F. D. Wagner became the first Chief, Naval Air Reserve Training (CNAResTra) on November 1, 1945. From his headquarters in Glenview, CNAResTra could control the thousands of naval air reservists throughout the country. Rear Admiral E. C. Ewen took over from RAdm. Wagner in December 1945 and, together with Brigadier General C. B. Schilt — Medal of Honor winner in Nicaragua in 1928 — built the joint resources of the Navy and Marine Corps Air Reserves.

Launching the admittedly ambitious air

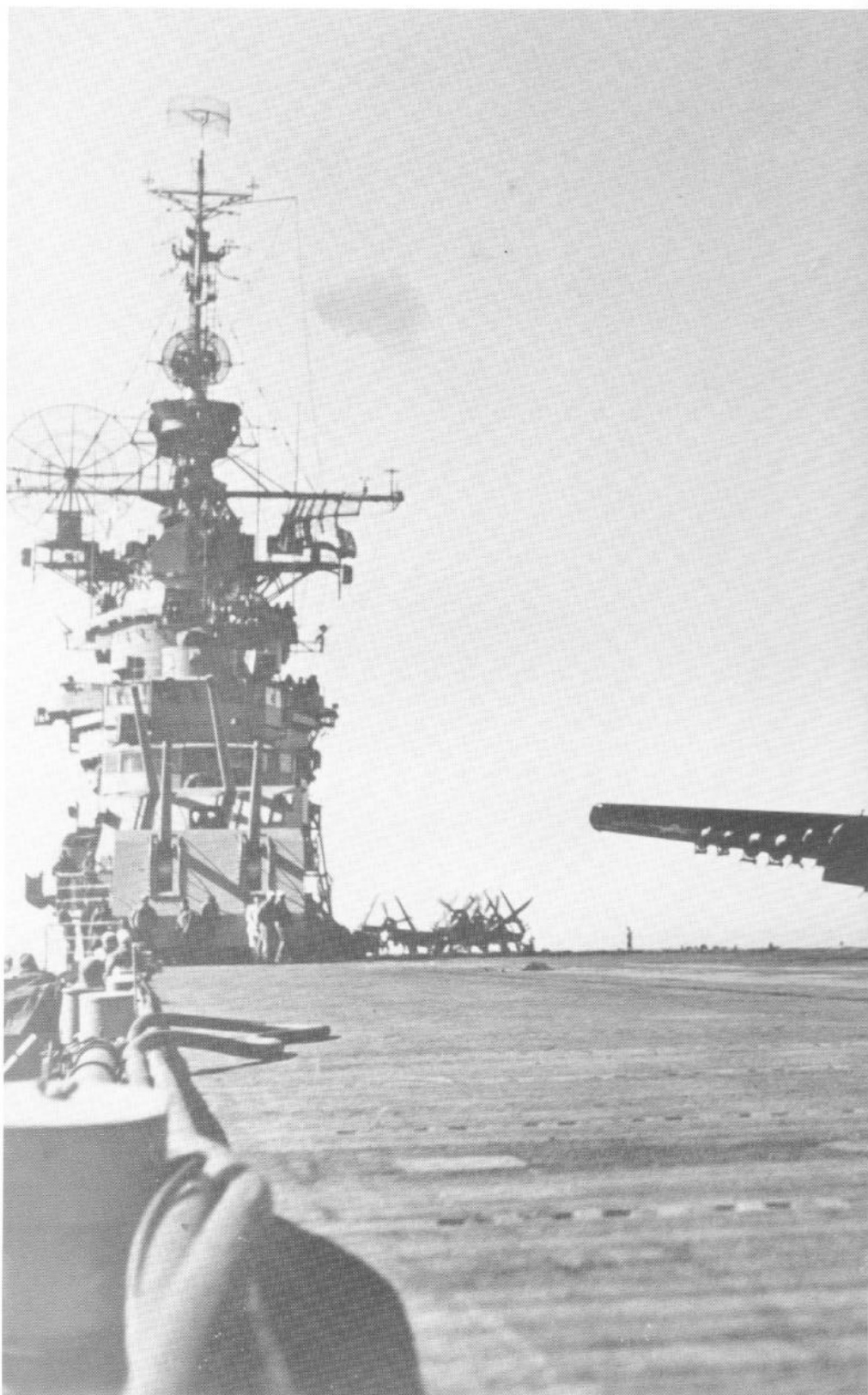
reserve program was far from easy. Personnel to fill the active duty complement of 21 naval air stations and training units had to be recruited from the veterans who were released or discharged from the Navy. In some instances, it took six months to get half of the active duty allowance filled. A complement of 5,000 officers and 30,000 enlisted men was assigned to the "ready reserve," as those who were in a "drill-pay status" were called.

The mission of the ready reserve was to form a group of trained pilots and men to man the "mothballed fleet" in the event of a national emergency. A "standby reserve" made up of volunteers in a nonpay status would act as a buffer and replace those in the ready reserve who were recalled to active duty.

The first year of operation proved conclusively that war-trained reservists still had an interest in the Navy and in Naval Aviation. Naval Reserve aviators flew 412,000 flight hours and 55 air groups were commissioned throughout the Naval Air Reserve Training Command. In 1947, the ready reserve was redesignated the "Organized Reserve," and the standby reserve was called the "Volunteer Reserve." The rough spots uncovered in a year of operation were smoothed out. Close harmony between the squadrons and training activity resulted. There were 71,419 officers and 15,458 enlisted men in the Naval Reserve.

When Rear Admiral R. F. Whitehead became CNAResTra in February 1948, 200 squadrons had been commissioned, and their pilots flew nearly a half-million hours. On the ground, 17,000 troops kept the more than 1,500 aircraft flying. The big test came in the fall of 1948 when the reservists, by now nicknamed "weekend warriors," took their WW II-vintage aircraft, including F6F *Hellcats* and F4U *Corsairs*, on their first carrier qualifications since the war. Fifty pilots made a total of 421 carrier landings without incident.

The following year, NAS Squantum sent Carrier Air Group 56 aboard USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* as the first air group from the New England area to go aboard a carrier. Thirty-seven pilots eventually made 222 landings on FDR. For many, this was their first time at sea as well as the first carrier qualification





**An AD Skyraider launches from a carrier's flight deck. The dive and torpedo-bomber served in the Korean War and the Vietnam conflict.**

period. Naval Air Reserve activities were not limited just to carriers. In 1949, seven PBY *Catalina* flying boats from Patrol Squadron 69 visited NAS Miami and, for two weeks, conducted independent operations.

By the end of the decade, the Naval Air Reserve was a viable, working organization. In July 1950, it was called upon to serve in yet another conflict, in Korea.

When North Korean forces invaded South Korea, crossing the 38th parallel in late June 1950, they were subjected to attacks by aircraft from the carrier *Valley Forge*, which was patrolling offshore. As the conflict grew in intensity, it was clear that it would not be resolved quickly and, once again, America geared up for a war. One aspect involved the mobilization of selected units and squadrons of the Naval Air Reserve, eventually numbering 84. Over 30,000 reservists eventually were recalled, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Several aviation squadrons volunteered en masse, taking pride in demonstrating their patriotism and preparedness. VF-781 at Los Alamitos, Calif., was the first reserve squadron to volunteer.

Many of the squadrons were still flying obsolete WW II aircraft and, although their services were welcomed, their transition to current aircraft such as the AD *Skyraider* and F9F *Panther* took time. Perhaps the only units which needed little or no training were the squadrons flying the F4U *Corsair*. These fighter-bombers were in great demand. In fact, they served throughout the three-year conflict, not only with the Navy but with the Marines, from carriers and shore bases, by day and night.

As the reserve recall gathered momentum, squadrons manned entirely by reservists flew increasing numbers of sorties against enemy targets. At one time, USS *Bon Homme Richard* was manned entirely by reservists. USS *Boxer*, with reserve squadrons from Olathe, Kans.; Glenview, Ill.; Memphis, Tenn.; and Dallas, Texas, had 90-percent reserve manning, while *Princeton* had 50

percent. The presence of reserve-manned carriers allowed fleet carriers to come off the line for rest and replenishment. In March 1951, the first all-reserve air group took off from *Boxer* to attack targets along the entire front of the 38th parallel. At times, 75 percent of a month's sorties were flown by reserve aircrews.

By the time the last Neptunes were delivered in 1962, the designation P2V-7S had changed to SP-2H (pictured here). As P-3 Orions filled out fleet squadrons, P-2s continued in reserve and support roles.

The reservists flew everything from prop-driven *Skyraiders* and patrol planes to the new *Panther* and *Banshee* fighter-bombers.

Famed author James Michener immortalized the Naval Air Reservists in his novel *The Bridges at Toko-ri*, which told the story of Denver lawyer Harry Brubaker who suddenly finds himself flying from a carrier against a little-known enemy, in a little-understood war. The book was made into a poignant moving starring William Holden and Grace

Kelly, as Brubaker's wife. The book addressed several aspects of the reservists' commitment and the question, "Where do we get such men?"

Upon his return from Korea in April 1952, Vice Admiral H. M. Martin, Commander, Naval Air Force, Pacific Fleet, wrote to Rear Admiral L. A. Moebus, CNAResTra:

"I sincerely believe that this country never before has had a reserve so splendidly trained and ready to meet any sudden emergency. I am likewise firmly



**A**n anonymous reservist wrote the following account of his service. In some ways it presents the feeling of many servicemen 15 years later during Vietnam.

#### **I Flew with CAG-101**

My name is Smith. Lieutenant Charles Smith, USNR, to be correct. I'm a Naval Aviator just back from Korea. Don't want to talk about it? I thank heaven I'm able to

talk. But you are right. I don't want to talk about myself, particularly. I want to talk about a lot of guys — ground crewmen, enlisted men, and pilots like myself that I met out there.

I made a promise to those guys. It started out as a joke at first. We had a lot of time on our hands while our carrier, *Boxer* was en route to Korea. When they found out that I used to be a newspaperman, they would sit around making up corny headlines like "Local

Barber Trims Commie Jet" or "Merchant Mugs MiG."

You see, we were all reservists, had civilian jobs, a family maybe. There were shoe salesmen, brokers, garage mechanics and, yes, even a barber. Jokingly, I said if I ever got back alive I'd tell the world their story. As it turned out, their story is no joke. Fred Painter did clobber a YAK that jumped him. Fred owns an appliance store. Joe Gino, the barber, put the clippers to several air

convinced that never before has our country realized such dividends from a peacetime training program. It is my sincere hope that we will profit from our experience in Korea and continue to maintain our Naval Air Reserve program at peak efficiency."

The reserves intended to carry out VAdm. Martin's wishes and, as the Korean War came to a close in July 1953, Naval Air Reserve squadrons continued to perform drills and two-week training periods.

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## VI. 1953-1968: Stability with Transition, Props to Jets

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When the reservists returned from service in Korea, the biggest change occurring was the transition from familiar, relatively obsolete propeller-driven aircraft to more modern equipment. Korea had placed a drain on some of the more utilitarian types of prop aircraft such as the *Skyraider* and *Corsair*. While the Marine Air Reserves held on a little longer to the F4U-1, the

Naval Air Reserve made the change to jets sooner. In April 1955, the first F9F *Panthers* joined the Naval Air Reserve Training Command. By the mid-1950s, however, the air reserve had settled into a period of tranquility.

To clarify the recall eligibility of individual reservists, Congress established "ready" and "standby" categories in the Armed Forces Reserve Act of 1952. Ready Reserves could be recalled in an emergency declared war. In addition, categories of "active" and

strips before he was through. But let me tell the story from the beginning.

Like I said, we were members of the Reserve, the Naval Air Reserve. We used to make weekend trips to the nearest naval air station to maintain our flight proficiency and keep our hands in. Some of us got paid, some didn't. The money didn't matter much.

Sure, we know we stood a good chance of being called in the event of an emergency or a war. But we got back with the old gang, told sea stories, and had a chance to fly or fool around with the planes. Then the training started getting tougher, our flight syllabus kept getting tighter. There was less time for sea stories or coffee after a flight. Toward the end they were really piling it on us. I guess we all knew it was just a matter of time.

I got my orders in the middle of July. I had just taken the family to the mountains. I had 24 hours to report. It was the same with the rest. I found out later that more than 3,100 guys like myself had received similar orders. Twenty-four hours later they were all there. Their businesses, their homes, their families had been left behind. They didn't know where they were going, or exactly what they were going to do. They did know they were ready.

How does a guy feel? What goes through his mind, especially if he has a wife and a couple of kids? I remember the tight feeling in my throat and a knot in my stomach. My hands were sweaty, too. I remember saying to myself, "This is it."

Yes. my wife Alice cried a little. She tried hard not to but women are like that. The kids didn't know what it meant. I could see the question marks in their eyes along with the tears. I knew I'd miss them.

It was harder to go this time, yes, a

million times harder. Sure, I flew with the Navy in WW II but I was young. The wide blue yonder was a challenge, a challenge to youth. I accepted it eagerly. This time there was no challenge.

I had no desire to feel a thousand horses pulling me through the air, or the wind clutching my flight jacket. I wanted to laugh and say it was all a big joke. Only it wasn't. Somebody somewhere needed me. I remember I felt like a policeman when I pinned my wings on my greens.

Sure I could have requested a deferment and probably gotten it, so could the rest of them. But they didn't. Don't ask me why. A man must live with himself, I guess.

But there we were on board USS *Boxer* heading for Korea and God knows what. The intensive training we had received was behind us. It was the first time in Naval Aviation history that an all-reserve squadron had struck back at the enemy. The eyes of an anxious nation were on us.

Some time later we joined *Princeton* and *Valley Forge*, as part of Task Force 77. There were humorous little parodies by the "Happy Valley" boys and bits of verse from the "Sweet Pea." With appropriate ceremony, *Boxer* was dubbed the "Busy Bee." We had joined a great team.

The din of this brief welcome still rang in our ears as we prepared to launch our first aerial attack. No longer "weekend warriors," we were members of Carrier Air Group 101 and part of the Navy, the fighting Navy!

I'm not going to bore you with a long war story. The record of the "Busy Bee" and the Naval Air Reservists that served on her speaks for itself.

Members of VF-721, VA-702. VF-791 and VF-884 were in the air more than 20,000 hours and flew over 8,000 sorties against the enemy. Seven thousand

enemy casualties resulted. These "butchers, bakers and candlestick makers" virtually pulverized bridges, railroads and troop concentrations from the 38th parallel to the muddy Yalu.

Their *Corsairs*, *Skyriders* and *Panthers* gladdened the hearts of ground troops as they flew in close air support, or their napalm tanks sent seething flame over advance enemy positions. For seven months, these Naval Air Reservists carried the fight to the enemy.

They're home now, or back in the States, just like I am. They left behind them a wonderful record. A record for Naval Air Reservists of *Bon Homme Richard* and *Antietam* to shoot at as they take our place on the team.

Perhaps this message from Commander Air Forces, Pacific Fleet will illustrate what I mean:

"The members of the former reserve squadrons of Carrier Air Group 101 have earned the admiration and gratitude of both the Navy and the nation for their magnificent performance of duty while conducting combat operations against the enemy in Korea. Despite losses suffered from the constantly increasing accuracy and intensity of the enemy's antiaircraft fire, you have maintained the aggressiveness that characterized our fighting men, and seven thousand enemy casualties attest to the vigor and determination of your attack. My congratulations to each officer and man for his part in the splendid record the Group has established. Vice Admiral T. L. Sprague."

That's the story of Joe Gino, barber; Fred Painter, merchant; and a host of others just like them. I'm proud to tell the story of these "modern minutemen."

There's Alice with the kids. Guess what? We're going to the mountains! ■

"inactive" determined the status of reservists in certain programs. Active status reserves were those participating in accredited training programs, and inactive referred to those not participating in any training.

Because reservists make their livings like other civilians, it was necessary to make the training convenient and some reserve activities provided airlifts, if warranted, a practice which continues to the present day.

Besides the actual bases which served as training facilities, various supporting and administrative units were created, such as air wing staffs, auxiliary air units and auxiliary ground units.

Although transition to jets would eventually come in the very early 1960s, the Naval Air Reserve in the 1950s still made due with prop types, including the AD *Skyraider*, P4Y *Privateer* for patrol duties and the R5D four-engine transport. PV-2 *Venturas* and P2V *Neptunes* occasionally supplemented the roster. An odd type which found its way into Naval Air Reserve service was the Grumman AF *Guardian*, a unique approach to carrier-based ASW, arriving at NAS Oakland, Calif., in December 1952. The AF served for several years in the reserves.

By conducting training on weekends, civilian employment did not have to be disrupted. Some reservists still had to use their vacation time, however, to participate in the two-week active duty periods. But most employees allowed their double-citizens extra time, just as most do today.

Following Korea, the reserves continued to drill, and were not recalled to active duty again until the fall of 1961.

When the communists threw up a wall in the divided city of Berlin, thereby challenging the 16-year-old agreement of the freedom of the city squarely placed in East Germany, Soviet territory, the U.S. called 3,600 Naval Air Reservists in 18 squadrons to active duty. Although the units remained in the country, the show of resolve apparently impressed the Soviets and the world in general.

Carl Vinson, then Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said, "These reserves were ordered to active duty to prevent a war, not fight a war. They were called to meet the crisis and it is to their everlasting credit that they met

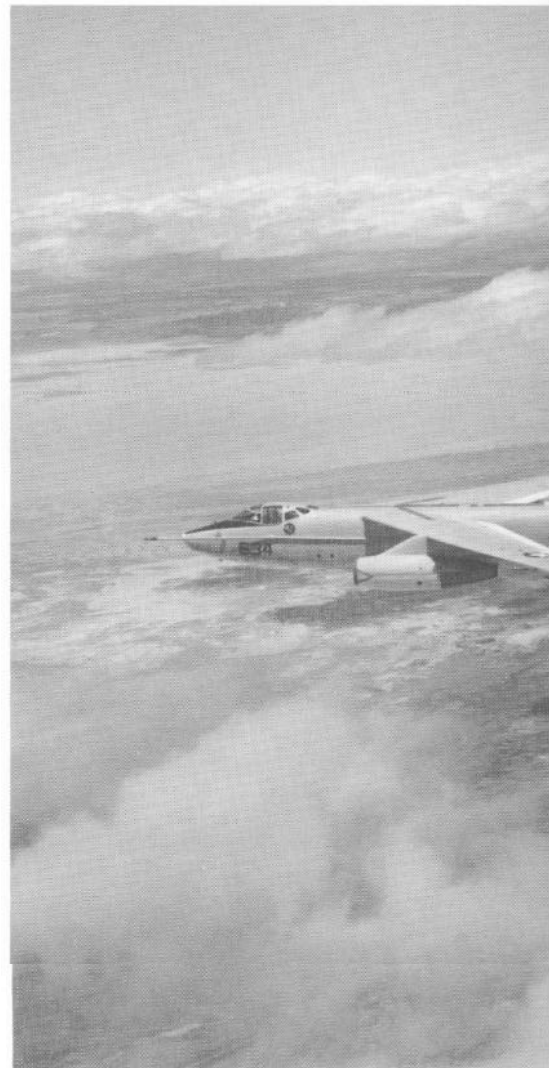
**Two RF-8G Crusaders of VFP-306 fly formation with a KA-3B tanker from VAK-308 in 1983. Though the VAK squadrons continue to provide aerial refueling services, VFP-306 was disestablished in 1984 and its sister unit, VFP-206, will be disestablished in early 1987.**

the crisis head-on."

The Berlin crisis was the first time the 1959 integration of the Naval Air Reserves into the Selected Reserve had been exercised. The integration had made all Naval Air Reservists eligible for active duty within hours after the commencement of the emergency. During this time, the emphasis for the reserves swung away from fighter and attack training to ASW and, as a result, several reserve units transitioned to the relatively modern Grumman S2F *Tracker* and later models of the P2V *Neptune*.

The Naval Air Reserve remained active throughout the mid-1960s, attending to various crises, and training on their aging equipment. Most of the tactical reserves had made the transition to jets, the most modern equipment being the F-1 (or FJ in pre-1962 designation) *Fury*, a derivative of the F-86 series. In fact, the *Fury* had arrived in the reserves as early as 1948, when the Oakland reserves acquired several FJ-1s. Other types included the F-2 *Banshee* (nee F2H) and F-9 *Cougar*, all representing first-generation jet technology of the mid to late 1940s. The fleet was working with the new McDonnell F-4 *Phantom* and late models of the A-4 *Skyhawk*, having retired several types such as the McDonnell F-3 *Demon*, an underpowered behemoth whose potential was never fully realized.

Even as the devastating decade of direct American involvement in Southeast Asia approached, there was little thought given to updating the equipment of the Naval Air Reserve, or any of the various reserve components. Even when the August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident brought full participation by American fleet forces, it would be four more years before the reserves were directly tested and steps taken to change the makeup of the program. Surprisingly, as huge an effort as Vietnam was to become, the Naval Air Reserve had very little direct participation, aside from some initial transport runs to South Vietnam in 1966. Of course, many of the aircrews joining the Navy were reservists on active duty, but not the true "weekend warrior"



recalled reservists. Vietnam was to be largely an active duty affair.

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## VII. Reorganization and Revitalization in the 1970s

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Cruising the Korean coast in January 1968, the light cargo ship USS *Pueblo* seemed to have nothing to do with the U.S. Naval Air Reserve. But, when the ship was captured and boarded by North Korean sailors on January 23, the seizure set off a chain of events which eventually affected the reserves in a dynamic fashion. In addition to the immediate reaction of sending a fleet carrier task force up into the Sea of Japan toward the Korean Peninsula, away from its normal duty off Vietnam, U.S. President Lyndon Johnson also mobilized six Naval Air Reserve carrier squadrons. The *Pueblo* incident settled into a typical cycle of condemnation and rebuttal from both sides, and lost in the more sensational



headlines was the fact that the reserves were having trouble.

For several years, the reservists had flown obsolete aircraft and now the time factor in upgrading to fleet-comparable models was slowing down the speed at which the squadrons readied themselves for integration into the fleet. It was embarrassing as well as counterproductive. Fighter units struggling at NAS Jacksonville, Fla., were hopelessly lost in transitioning to the newer versions of the F-8 *Crusader*. By September, with the diminished state of the crisis, and the lack of readiness displayed by the reserve squadrons, the six units were released from active duty. But the lesson on the state of preparedness of the reserves was not lost and plans were immediately initiated to change the program.

The major thrust of the plan was to create a mirror image of the fleet. On April 1, 1970, two Reserve Carrier Air Wings (CVWRs) were commissioned —

CVWRs 20 and 30. (In addition, two short-lived wings were commissioned for ASW carrier use — CVSGRs 70 and 80.) The reorganization placed all carrier-type squadrons in two reserve carrier air wings and two carrier ASW groups. Twelve patrol (VP) and three transport (VR) squadrons were also part of the reorganization. It was an ambitious plan, but one whose time had come. It provided a chance for the reserves to operate the same aircraft the fleet did, thereby hopefully allowing the reservists to maintain currency in their type in the event of mobilization.

The CVWRs were composed of eight squadrons, similar to the fleet air wings: two fighter (VF); three attack (VA); one light photoreconnaissance (VFP); one carrier airborne early warning (VAW); and one tactical electronic warfare (VAQ), later aerial refueling (VAK). An additional squadron, the VAQ EW unit, made its appearance in the early 1980s.

The aircraft with which to equip the new squadrons of the CVWRs were drawn from current stocks and included F-8H *Crusaders*, A-4L *Skyhawks*, RF-8G photo- *Crusaders*, E-1B *Tracers* and KA-3B *Skywarriors*. Physical location of the squadrons was more centralized. Those squadrons belonging to CVWR-20, which would deploy to the Atlantic Fleet, were situated at East Coast naval air stations such as NAS Atlanta, Ga.; NAF Washington, D.C.; and NAS Cecil Field, Fla. CVWR-30's squadrons, slated for Pacific Fleet deployment in the event of mobilization, were located on the West Coast, at NASs Miramar, Lemoore, Point Mugu and Alameda, Calif. There was one exception, one which was never changed. VFP-306, CVWR-30's light photoreconnaissance squadron, equipped with RF-8Gs, was based at NAF Washington, along with its sister squadron, VFP-206. Although attention was occasionally given to relocating VFP-306 on the West Coast, the change was never seriously considered, and the squadron remained near the nation's capital during its entire 14-year existence.

The reorganization of the Naval Air Reserve in 1970 was hailed as a major milestone. The reserves now truly mirrored the fleet, and could be recalled as entire organizational wings, ready to deploy in a crisis. No longer would individual squadrons, or even personnel, be subject to recall. The table of administrative organization was exactly like the fleet, complete with an air group commander, always a regular Navy senior commander or junior captain.

Another advantage of the reserve air wing concept was that the entire wing would perform the regular annual two-week active duty for training (AcDuTra) as a unit, thereby providing an opportunity for the wing to come together at least once a year and operate as it was intended.

The first order of business was to conduct carrier qualifications with its new aircraft. Accordingly, squadrons of CVWR-30 went out to the carrier *Roosevelt* (CVA-42) in late 1970. Operations went smoothly, especially since many of the members of the squadrons were recently-returned Vietnam veterans with considerable operational and combat experience in

their particular aircraft.

After carrier qualifications, the wings deployed to several sites, such as the weapons training range at NAS Fallon, Nev., 60 miles east of Reno. Fallon's limited facilities necessitated many of the squadrons staging from NAS Miramar's photo facilities which provided developing services for the aircraft's cameras and film. This situation was remedied in 1977 when Fallon installed the necessary film processing equipment, allowing the VFPs to remain at Fallon during the period of deployment.

This H-3 from HS-84 gets a steady and professional hand from a crewman during in-flight refueling. The reserves have been flying the Sea King since the early seventies when four reserve squadrons received SH-3Hs.



By the mid-seventies, the squadrons of the CVWRs had begun to receive even more modern aircraft in the form of the F-4 *Phantom* and A-7 *Corsair*. An earlier attempt to include the *Phantom* in the reserves at a California site in 1970 proved abortive and it was not until 1974 that the first war-weary F-4Bs made their appearance in VFs 301 and 302 at NAS Miramar. The Marine Air Reserve also accepted its first F-4Bs at this time. The attack squadrons, based at Point Mugu, Lemoore and Alameda, exchanged their A-4s for A-7As, and eventually A-7Bs. With colorful markings applied to their aircraft — recalling the 1930s when multicolored aircraft populated the fleet and reserves — the Naval Air Reserve had finally begun to achieve a measure of parity with the fleet.

The apparent success of the reserve wing concept was such that a wing was deployed with a fleet carrier for a short time, and the CVWR assumed the role of the ship's actual dedicated wing. Thus, CVWR-30's AcDuTra period began in November 1976 and, for a continuous period of seven days, operated from USS *Ranger* (CV-61).

The success of the *Ranger* deployment encouraged the reserve air wings to participate in various exercises, as well as to travel farther afield from their bases.

Of course, besides the more glamorous tactical jet airwings, the remainder of the Naval Air Reserve — the patrol and helicopter wings — had also received updated equipment with the reorganization. In the early 1970s, although many VP squadrons still flew the venerable P-2E *Neptune*, the transition to the P-3A *Orion* was well under way, and units in Massachusetts, Glenview, Jacksonville and Moffett Field took advantage of the greatly increased capabilities of their new aircraft. Patrol Squadron 91 accepted the first P-3As in November 1970.

The HS squadrons, with their ASW mission, gained the H-3 *Sea King*. Two unique squadrons, HAL-4 and HAL-5, were formed to operate the HH-1K, a gunship version of the ubiquitous *Huey* of Vietnam fame. Loosely descended from HAL-3, which operated various armed versions of the *Huey* from 1967 to 1972 in Vietnam, the reserve HALs also incorporated training in terrorist control and special operations in their overall mission. Formed in 1975, HC-9 remains unique as the only dedicated combat search and rescue helicopter squadron in the Navy, fleet or reserve. Flying a specially modified version of the H-3 — the HH-3A — California-based HC-9 trains for a mission practically "invented" by the Vietnam war rescue of downed flight crewmen in hostile environments.

A major administrative change to come from the revamping of the reserves was the consolidation of the headquarters for the two large components, air and surface reserve. Prior to the consolidation, which officially occurred on February 1, 1973, the surface reserves had been administered from facilities in Omaha, Neb. — the reasoning being that this site was approximately in the middle of the country — while the Naval Air Reserve had its headquarters at NAS Glenview, Ill., near Chicago. While



this arrangement was satisfactory, a consolidation was deemed necessary to go with the new organization and, accordingly, New Orleans was chosen as the location for the new command.

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### Chapter VIII: The 1980s, Present and Future

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The Naval Air Reserve entered the 1980s on a definite upswing, as did much of the military. The ridiculous stigma attached to military service imposed by the long, frustrating war in Southeast Asia was slowly beginning to disappear, especially coupled with a rising unemployment rate in the public sector. Years of neglect, fostered by Vietnam and perpetuated by a bumbling, inept political leadership in the last half of the 1970s, had crippled not only the active duty forces but the reserves as well.

An open arms policy where the U.S. became a haven for not only bonafide refugees from Haiti, Vietnam, Cambodia and Cuba but for the dregs of these countries' societies — criminals, drug addicts and activists — further eroded this country's already shaky standing in the world arena.

It took a shattering event in November 1979 — the seizure of over 50 U.S. citizens by radical elements in the strife-torn country of Iran, once a staunch U.S. ally — to bring the American people together as a nation once more. And with the drastically changed political climate, which the long, so-called hostage crisis brought, liberal politics that had so badly damaged the U.S. capacity to act decisively were given up for the more conservative politics of the Ronald Reagan administration. Thus, as the leadership of the country changed hands in January 1981, coinciding with the emotional return of the remaining 51 Iranian-held American hostages, the U.S. quickly began rebuilding its crippled military capability. And included within this massive rebirth was funding for the Naval Air Reserve.

The main thrust centered on new equipment. The basic reorganization of 1970 was found to be a viable program. What was needed in the 1980s was complete parity with the fleet. Even during the periodic bursts of updating, such as the early 1970s, the reserves still operated aircraft which were in the early stages of retirement from the fleet. The F-4B and A-7A/B are good examples. Obsolescent, not obsolete, but approaching it.

Actually some modernization had continued. The ancient E-1B *Tracers* had been replaced by E-2 *Hawkeyes*. VAW-88 of CVWR-30 received its first aircraft in time to take them on AcDuTra in October 1977. The F-4Bs of VFs 201, 202, 301 and 302 had been exchanged for F-4Ns, and a new squadron had joined the CVWRs — the VAQ which operated EA-6As, two-seat, specially-modified A-6 *Intruders*. VAQ-209 assigned to CVWR-20, flew from NAS Norfolk, Va., and VAQ-309, operating with CVWR-30, was based at Whidbey Island, Wash., (The VAQ designation had been used by the KA-3B tanker squadrons 208 and 308, but was always something of a misnomer since, aside from occasional path-finding navigational duties on long transoceanic flights, the big, twin-jet KA-3Bs "Whales" had only one mission: aerial refueling. Therefore, with the establishment of the more properly-equipped EA-6A units, the VAQ electronic warfare designation was reassigned. The aerial refuelers became VAKs.)

One problem which began to appear in the early eighties, and which threatened to virtually cripple a major portion of the reserve tactical community, involved the engines for the A-7Bs which equipped six reserve light attack squadrons. Basically, the problem was one of age, which translated into unreliability and no airplanes. Indeed, the problem was so acute by 1983 that the planned CVWR-30 AcDuTra in May at NAS Fallon, including an operational readiness inspection, was nearly cancelled due to the nonavailability of the wing's A-7s. In any event, the cruise was greatly modified, allowing two to three A-7s from each squadron to use those engines which were still operational to fly to Fallon, and the inspection was cancelled.

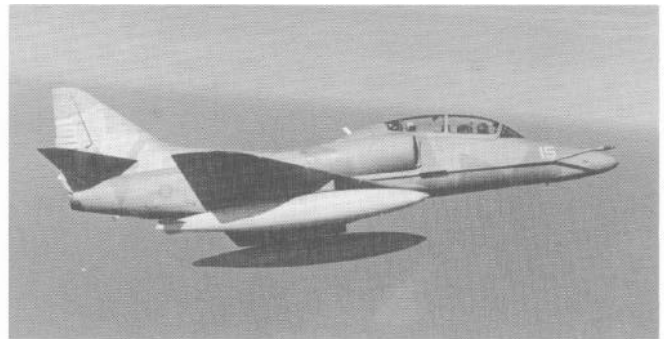
The Naval Air Reserve was embarrassed and frustrated. Again, what seemed a good program, manned by experienced and willing people, was being damaged by the age of its equipment. The decision was made to bring the A-7E into the reserves and, in a landmark decision, to allow transition to the spanking new F/A-18 *Hornet*. VA-303, based at NAS Alameda, Calif., was designated as the first Naval Air Reserve F/A-18 squadron. The Naval Air Reserve was to receive first-line equipment for the first time in its nearly 70-year existence. Redesignated VFA-303, the squadron formally accepted its first *Hornet* on October 19, 1985, after a two-

year transition program in conjunction with VFA-125, the West Coast fleet readiness squadron. In addition, the fighter squadrons would transition to the F-14 *Tomcat*, nearly bringing to a close the incredible career of the F-4 *Phantom*. It was a clean sweep by a new broom.

Viewed from a political standpoint, there were several aspects of this tremendous influx, not the least of which was the new prominence of the military as a whole, and the somewhat unusual designation of an active Naval Air Reservist as Secretary of the Navy. John Lehman was quickly confirmed in 1981 and became one of the most active secretaries in the history of the office. A young, dynamic man in his late thirties, Lehman was then also a Lieutenant Commander and a designated A-6 bombardier/navigator who drilled at NAS Oceana with VA-42, the A-6 fleet replacement squadron. At last, the Naval Air Reserve, indeed the Navy, had a champion who understood the service's needs and organization. Lehman, of course, brought new visibility to the Naval Air Reserve, providing the thrust for new programs and equipment.

In June 1983, VAW-78 accepted its first E-2C, a significant increase in mission capability and a major step toward fleet parity for the reserves. The value of training reservists in so sophisticated an aircraft as the E-2C was quickly realized when a number of VAW-78 crewmen volunteered for Christmas duty in the eastern Mediterranean to augment the E-2 squadrons already on station in that troubled area. The fleet squadrons were facing an acute manpower shortage and the arrival of trained reserve replacements, ready to go, helped relieve the strain during the intense period of operations. In addition, VAW-78 received the Meritorious Unit Commendation for its part in providing surveillance resources for the government's ongoing antidrug campaign.

Continuing with modernization plans. VF-301 at NAS Miramar, accepted its first F-14 on October 1, 1984. A day earlier, in ceremonies at NAF Washington, D.C., VFP-306 was disestablished, the first Naval Air Reserve squadron to do so since the massive 1970 reorganization. The requirement for reconnaissance would be assumed by VF-301's *Tomcats* which would carry the tactical air reconnaissance pod system (TARPS). Thus, VFP-306's 27-Year-old RF-8G



Marshall Lefavor



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*Crusaders* were retired, leaving VFP-206 as the sole operator of the *Crusader* in the Navy until March 30, 1987. On this date, VFP-206 was disestablished and the last U.S. Navy RF-8G made its final flight.

VF-301 quickly brought itself up to operational readiness with its new mount, conducting the first carrier qualifications in February 1985 aboard USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV-63). As Rear Admiral C. J. Kempf, Chief of Naval Reserve, wrote "What is happening...is a major step toward horizontal integration...[The F-14]...is an airplane that is identical to fleet equipment...Reserve fighter squadrons will soon be able to deploy to fleet carriers as units..."

CVWR-20 emulated the 1976 *Ranger* deployment of CVWR-30 when the entire wing deployed aboard USS *Eisenhower* (CVN-69) in September 1985. During their two-week AcDuTra, the squadrons of CVWR-20 accumulated over 1,000 arrested landings.

A new addition to the Naval Air Reserve program was the creation of Squadron Augment Units (SAUs). Designed to create a pool of trained reservists, the SAUs provide personnel to augment fleet squadrons to wartime manning should the need arise. In addition, the SAU reservists drill with their designated unit or the parent fleet

squadron, as well as fly the fleet squadron's aircraft to maintain proficiency. SAUs are particularly valuable where not enough aircraft are available to create an individual reserve squadron, such as the F-14 or A-6. Thus, although the introduction of the F-14 into the Naval Air Reserve has been accomplished, those reservists trained in the *Tomcat* drill with the Oceana-based SAUs which fly aircraft belonging to VF-101, the East Coast F-14 fleet readiness squadron (FRS). In addition, A-6 SAU members fly VA-42 A-6Es, augmenting the East Coast A-6 FRS.

Other components of the Naval Air Reserve are benefitting from modernization. In a similar program to the SAU, the maritime patrol squadrons are bringing the Reserve Master Augment Unit (MAU) into operation. The latest versions of the P-3C have been available only to fleet squadrons, leaving the reserve units based throughout the country to fly older, less capable A and B models, albeit with some updates incorporated. With the invention of the MAU concept, reservists in designated areas, such as Brunswick, Maine, fly the latest P-3Cs, and would report directly to their sponsoring squadron if mobilized.

Reserve VP duties take members all over the world, filling in occasionally for

Left, two F-4s Phantoms of VF-202 fly near their base at NAS Dallas. VF-202 and VF-201, the other Texas-based reserve fighter squadron, transitioned to the F-14 in 1987. Top, a TA-4J from Oceana-based VC-12. VCs 12 and 13 provide valuable adversary services to fleet and reserve squadrons. Above, VAQ-309 flies the EA-6A, the electronic countermeasures version of the veteran Intruder.

regular Navy VP squadrons, as far away as Spain and Japan. During the summer of 1984, four squadrons from Reserve Patrol Wing, Pacific took turns flying tours in Japan.

VPs 65, 67, 69 and 91 each flew their P-3Bs out of Misawa for one-month periods. The reserve *Orions* supplemented the resources of VP-48, the fleet VP squadron.

The reserve helicopter community has experienced changes, also. The two HS reserve squadrons, flying SH-3Ds, were redesignated HSL-84 and 85 and, in March 1984, HSL-84 traded its SH-3Ds for SH-2Fs which are part of the LAMPS MK I ASW system. HSL-74, based at NAS South Weymouth, Mass., also acquired SH-2Fs in January 1985.

Perhaps the most successful, though not as well-known nor as glamorous, story in the "new" Naval Air Reserve involves the transport squadrons, VRs.

With the retirement of the last prop-driven C-118 four-engine transports in 1985, the Navy's VR squadrons are responsible for all the movement of personnel and logistical supplies, except for deliveries to aircraft carriers. Beginning with the 1970 reorganization, the reserve transport program gradually saw the introduction of the C-9, the Navy version of the McDonnell Douglas C-9 twin-jet airliner. Eleven reserve fleet logistics support squadrons make up the complement of the Fleet Logistics Support Wing, based at NAS New Orleans, La. In addition to the VRs, two fleet composite squadrons (VCs), flying A-4 *Skyhawks*, supply adversarial resources to various Navy squadrons.

The VRs proved invaluable during the hectic October 1983 actions in Grenada and Lebanon which necessitated using C-9s from Norfolk-based VR-56. In Grenada, VR-56 C-9s landed at Point Saline Airfield carrying the invasion force commander, Rear Admiral Joseph Metcalf, and his staff to the staging area. With another aircraft from VR-58, NAS Jacksonville, VR-56 flew the staff into the Cuban-built airfield at night and were, thus, the first fixed-wing aircraft to

land at Point Saline during the Grenada operation. VR-58 crews also flew the Cuban prisoners captured during the invasion of Grenada to Mexico to be eventually repatriated.

Only a few days after the Grenada conflict, VR-56 was again called on to transport wounded Marine survivors home from the bombing of their barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. With this impressive record of accomplishment during 1983, it was not surprising that VR-56 won the Noel Davis Trophy with Battle E for 1983.

Thus, as the U.S. Naval Air Reserve begins its eighth decade of organized service, and enters the last half of the 1980s, there are signs that it is finally within reach of attaining its goal of comparability to the fleet, both administratively and operationally.

The Naval Reserve is even part of space exploration. On October 1, 1983, the Naval Space Command was established at Dahlgren, Va., long the site of Navy-sponsored testing and evaluation. The new command was created to support the Navy's role in the ongoing national space programs. A reserve component was then created, headed by Captain S. David Griggs,

USNR-R. U.S. Naval Reserve Naval Space Command 0166, formed in January 1985 at Dahlgren, supports the parent command. Captain Griggs is an astronaut who flew in the space shuttle *Discovery*, mission 51D, April 12-19, 1985.

With the continuing introduction of fleet-comparable equipment, and requirements to use the new aircraft in exercises and surveillance programs, the Naval Air Reserve is much different from its earlier counterparts. The traditional public image of the Air Reserve as a flying club for airline pilots is changing. Those people involved directly with the squadrons have always known the truth. With six air wings, supporting facilities and thousands of personnel, the Naval Air Reserve is a major part of the overall Navy strength. Rear Admiral Tommie F. Rinard, Commander, Naval Air Reserve Force, summed it up when he wrote:

"Never has the readiness of the Naval Air Reserve Force been at a higher level. From the pilot who is training in the F/A-18 to the yeoman at a Naval Air Reserve Center, the Selected Reservist...is better trained and more professional than at any time in the history of the Naval Air Reserve." ■



The C-9B Skytrain II transport supports the logistics requirements of reserve and fleet squadrons.