

Pressure and Precision

An A-6 *Intruder* crew was on an A-20-R training hop that included a high-altitude transit, joining a radar-target identification/low-level route to the target with score based on both time-on-target (TOT) and practice bomb placement. They had launched under afternoon VMC conditions with target weather at the night TOT forecast to be marginal VMC.

The low-level portion of the mission began at twilight but, as the A-6 neared the target, it was dark and visibility was sharply curtailed due to a blanket of fog extending from the surface to 700 feet. (The squadron's nighttime minimum run-in altitude was 700 AGL.) Clouds were scattered in layers to 300 feet.

As they neared the target, the crew reported to the Navy controllers/spotters that they were at "nine miles for a straight path."

Sensing that timing was off, a crew member said, "We're going to be early." Then someone reported, "Put the boards out." Next the pilot apparently said, "I'm going to do a real quick S-turn." Shortly thereafter the *Intruder* crashed. A tower spotter noted a flash in the night, and the sound of jet engine noise lasted for several seconds before there was silence. The pilot and BN were killed on impact. The subsequent investigation revealed that the aircraft was in a steep turn when it went down.

This squadron had been unusually busy and, due to senior types being away on assignment, the Lieutenant BN in the mishap A-6 was filling the operations officer's shoes, writing the flight schedule and doing an excellent job. He was determined to get competitive exercise quals completed by all available crewmen, including himself.

The pilot returned from 11 days leave the day of the mishap, but had over 18 hours and a fair ration of night and actual instrument time in the last 30 days.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Dang blame it! Please learn from this one. Don't anyone press on like these unfortunate aviators did! Not in



sound judgment and poor risk. In peacetime, it's better to accept a lesser score than cross over into the zone of risk.

The Way It Was, 1943... Metamorphosis of a Navigator

Some pilots learn by study, others by observation, but some learn only the hard way.

A review of the circumstances under which the pilot of an OS2U-3 got himself completely lost on an antisubmarine patrol may prevent other and less lucky pilots from getting lost the same way.

This pilot knew that his surface wind at the time of departure was 15 knots from 045 degrees. He had the radioman take a drift sight at 2,000 feet. The radioman reported this wind to be 35 knots from 127 degrees.

Using this wind, the unsuspecting pilot went blithely on his way.

This was the basic error.

The radioman didn't know how to use the drift sight, and the pilot should have known this. Anyway, knowing the surface wind, he should have been suspicious of the wind as reported at 2,000 feet.

peacetime, specially! These young flyers were hard chargin', dedicated men. But that old demon pressure to hit the mark right on the money persuaded the crew to make a perilous turn down low, in murky weather.

End of lives. End of A-6.

At times there's a thin line between



We pick up our unsuspecting pilot again four hours later, when his flight should have been completed. But there was no land in sight. As one wag put it, he was completely "at sea."

Finally suspecting the drift sight, the pilot reworked his navigation, using the surface wind. This put him approximately 50 miles south of his base.

He then requested his radioman to take a direction finder bearing of the base. This was reported as 214 degrees.

But the radioman, apparently, wasn't any handier with the direction finder than with the drift sight.

The pilot did suspect the accuracy of this bearing and asked for a repeat and then another bearing. "No change — 214 degrees."

The pilot then "reluctantly" flew on his heading, thereby committing another grievous error.

A glance at his map, or familiarity with the terrain around the base, should have immediately shown the pilot that the bearing could not be correct, or they would then be over land.

Whether this bearing was entirely erroneous, or possibly a reciprocal bearing, was never cleared up.

What finally happened? Oh, about the time the gasoline supply was exhausted,

a tramp steamer came along and the pilot landed alongside and got a tow.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

There being more airplanes than ships, don't depend on a tramp steamer to cover up your faulty navigation. Also, there is no good substitute for common horse sense. (Reprinted from June 1, 1943)

Shakes and Bakes

The P-3 *Orion* was at 9,000 feet, straight and level on a nighttime patrol mission. There were scattered clouds, some broken layers and haze. Suddenly, the four-engine aircraft experienced severe turbulence which lasted 10 seconds. The aircraft lost 300 feet in the disruption. An in-flight technician was tossed five feet into the air. He landed, painfully, suffering a broken right kneecap.

A petty officer second class was standing on a C-130 *Hercules* to wash the upper fuselage. He lost his balance and fell 15 feet to the concrete ramp. He sustained injuries that resulted in 10 lost workdays. The fuselage was slick with

water and a cleaning compound. The petty officer was unrestrained and wore inadequate footwear.

It was windy and humid as the plane captain cleaned the canopy of an F-14 parked on the bow. At one point, he stood between the nonskid area and the fuselage. He slipped and fell to the flight deck, landing with both legs straddling a tie-down chain. He was hospitalized for five days.

Under circumstances similar to the above, another F-14 plane captain fell to the deck and fractured his leg. An injury that required medevac to a shore facility for an operation and two months in the hospital.

An *Intruder* maintenance man slipped when transferring his weight from the boarding ladder to the wing. He fell to the ground head first, arms extended. He broke both wrists.

The ejection seat of an A-4E *Skyhawk* parked in the hangar had been removed for maintenance. A man was working in the cockpit when the seat's rocket fired into the overhead of the hangar. The worker suffered first and second-degree burns on both arms and left leg. A 12 x 4-inch hole was created in the roof.



Grampaw Pettibone says:

Sounds like the Monday morning injury report after a hot and heavy-hittin' Sunday in the National Football League. Trouble is Naval Aviation plays every day, 365 days a year.

Old Gramps has a special place in his heart for the troops who keep 'em flyin' (specially those folks in colored jerseys on the flight deck). It hurts me when they hurt themselves whether it was their fault or not. And ain't it amazin' how airplanes can cause headaches, not to mention broken wrists, kneecaps and what-have-you even when they're sittin' still.

Supervisors: Lean on the troops to go by the book. The correct procedure is the safest procedure. And everybody, especially you officers, junior and senior alike, keep an alert eye on the action and play a part in stopping costly boners.

