20th Fighter Wing Association

Newsletter

30 September 2026



Welcome all ranks and AFSC's



The purpose of the Association

To preserve the military history and foster esprit de corps of past and present members of the 20th Fighter Wing and all previous and subsequent military iterations of that organization. Membership in the Association will be open to past and present members of the 20th Fighter Wing, their spouses and such other persons who have an interest in the affairs of the Association.

2025/2026 Board Members

Gino Passaro – President
Steve Homoki – Vice President
Dave Roberts – Chaplain:
Ron Obernier – Secretary
Art Sevigny – Historian
Missi Zender-Sakach - Treasurer
Steve Brown –2025 Reunion Chair
Missi Zender-Sakach – Past Reunion Chair

Your Association needs your urgent attention! Unless we have volunteers to take over the following positions in 2028 the Association will have to disband. Positions are President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Chaplain. If you have questions, please contact one of the Association Board Members.

20th FWA TREASURER'S REPORT
FEBRUARY 1, 2026 – AUGUST 31, 2026

Checks were issued for the awards given to individuals at Shaw AFB; these individuals chose to donate to the 55 FS Snack Bar Fund, the 77 FS Snack Bar Fund, and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society for a total of $1500. The organization donated an additional $2200 to NAFI at Shaw AFB in support of two of the base's social/charitable events and to further enhance Gino Passaro's ongoing efforts to increase membership.

Special thanks to Bill Hoge who helped facilitate the awards and contracts for these donations.

The organization also donated $318.64 to the Wethersfield Airfield Museum in England. You can find more information about the efforts to honor the history of the base at https://www.thefieldsassociation.org/the-history-of-raf-wethersfield or https://www.facebook.com/wethersfieldairfieldmuseum.

Over the past six months, membership dues have continued to be a source of income for the organization with a total of $2964.68 of revenue. The majority of these dues are paid by check, but many choose PayPal as well. For every PayPal payment of $20.00, we collect $18.81, so it continues to be an easy and safe way for members to transmit payment with minimal fees to the organization each month.

Reunion seed money, $2000, has been sent to Gino Passaro for initial planning of the New Orleans Reunion 2027.

As a small tax-exempt organization, we are required to submit an annual electronic notice, Form 990-N (i.e., Electronic Notice {e-Postcard)} for Tax-Exempt Organizations not Required To File Form 990 or 990-EZ) to the IRS. This form was successfully submitted on behalf of the organization in April 2026.

Respectfully Submitted,
Missi Zender-Sakach, Treasurer

Updated 20th Fighter Wing Association Website/Facebook Page

Quality Website Services (QWS), has completed the Refreshment of our website, and I think everyone will be really pleased with the result. The look and feel of the site are totally new, modern, and has all the "bells and whistles" we need to get our message out to the WWW.

Take a look at 20fwa.org and provide your feedback. Also, with all things new there might be some minor issues that may need to be adjusted or corrected, so let me know if you have any comments.

Also if you are on Facebook join our Facebook page at
https://www.facebook.com/20FWA

Ron Obernier, Secretary

New Members Since Last Newsletter

A warm welcome to our new members:

Mike and Veronica Welch. Mike served the 20TFW at Upper Heyford. He was in the 20th AMS from 1974-77.

Robert and Peggy Schicker. Bob served the 20TFW at Upper Heyford. He was in the 520th AGS, 55th AMU, & the 520th AGS from 1987-90.

Lost Members

THIS WAS POSTED IN THE LAST NEWSLETTER. IF YOU HAVE SINCE UPDATED YOUR MEMBERSHIP DISREGARD THE NOTICE AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT.

Association Member(s),
I have lost contact with the following members. Numerous attempts have been made to contact them but to no avail. If you are in contact with or know any of these members, please tell them to contact me at baloo1000@yahoo.com or text /call me at 618-540-9014.

unless I hear from them soon, they will be removed from the Active Membership Roster.

Scott Zobrist
Lloyd VanZee
James Tibbitts
John Neubauer
Ken Muldowney
Henry McCauley
Suzanne Krremer
David Cyphus
Oscar Castelo
Roger Benninger
Edward Herda
John Handy
Larry Edwards
John Eastabrooks
George Earles
Carlo DosSantos
Paul Davis
John Cox
Steven Bisel

Fallen Heros



This Listing contains only those warriors identified to the Association since the last newsletter.

Ronald Jay Wenger.

Ronald Jay Wenger served the United States Air Force in many capacities during his distinguished career and the 20th TFW at RAF Wethersfield, England during the years 1954-57. He was assigned to the 77th TFS and maintained the F-100 and was a true aviation pioneer. Ron was a long-time member of the 20th Fighter Wing Association.

Tom Yax

Tom Yax was a member of the 48th TFW and served as Director of Operations for the Wing. He was a member of the F111 family and a friend to many of you.

Rodney H. Fauser.

Rodney was the former Base Commander at RAF Upper Heyford from 1974 – 1977.

20th Fighter Wing News

New Commander of the 20th Fighter Wing

Col. Hugh E. Walker III is the new commander of the 20th Fighter Wing, officially assuming the role on July 2, 2026, at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina

Appointment and Ceremony

The change-of-command ceremony was presided over by Maj. Gen. Steven G. Behmer, commander of the 15th Air Force, who oversaw the traditional passing of the wing's

guidon from outgoing commander Col. Kevin D. Hicok to Walker. Behmer praised the wing's "professionalism, skill and dedication" and emphasized that "our Airmen deserve continued outstanding leadership

Waker is a career F-16 Fighting Falcon pilot with over 1,900 flight hours, including 725 combat hours. This is his first official day as wing commander, but he has extensive recent experience:

- Two years as 20th FW deputy commander (2024–2026)
- Acting wing commander in 2025 during Col. Hicok's deployment He is bringing "experience, wisdom, and leadership" to the wing, and has been described by Hicok as "no one else I would rather pass the guidon to" New Command Team

Walker's appointment was accompanied by the introduction of:

- Col. Brian D. Beears – new deputy commander
- Chief Master Sgt. Jarrod W. Getz – new command chief, with 24 years of Air Force service and prior roles at the 621st Contingency Response Wing and Travis AFB

The 20th Fighter Wing, known as the "Wild Weasels," has a long history of delivering decisive combat power. Walker's leadership is expected to continue that tradition, building on the wing's readiness and operational excellence

In summary: Col. Hugh E. Walker III is now the 20th Fighter Wing commander, succeeding Col. Kevin D. Hicok, with a leadership team that includes Col. Brian D. Beears and Chief Master Sgt. Jarrod W. Getz, all officially in place as of July 2, 2026



Col Hugh E. Walker lll, far right

A bit of History

by Art Sevigny

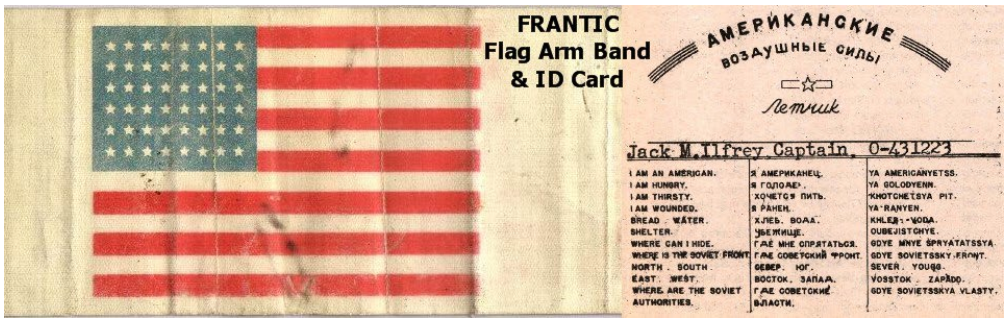
FRANTIC VI, 11-17 September 1943

The Allied combined bomber offensive in late 1943 was becoming a real threat to German industrial production. As a result, Albert Speer, Reichsminister of Armaments and War Production, began dispersing Germany's various production facilities. Dispersal included decentralizing the various phases of production and moving facilities further east out of the range of Allied bombers. At the Teheran Conference the US lobbied the Soviets to allow the creation of US airfields in the Soviet Union. The US argued that in doing so they would subject all German industry to strategic bombing and help hasten the end of the war. The plan called for 8th and 15th Air Forces to hit targets deep inside of Germany then continue on to bases within the Ukraine. There they would accomplish repairs, rearm, then hit another target on their return leg via Italy before continuing to their home bases. It was also believed this would force the Luftwaffe to move air assets east to counter the new threat and in doing so weaken the Luftwaffe's resources for the anticipated invasion of France. Additionally, this would allow more tonnage to be dropped; often missions were scrubbed when the weather forecast prevented returning bombers from landing at their home stations.

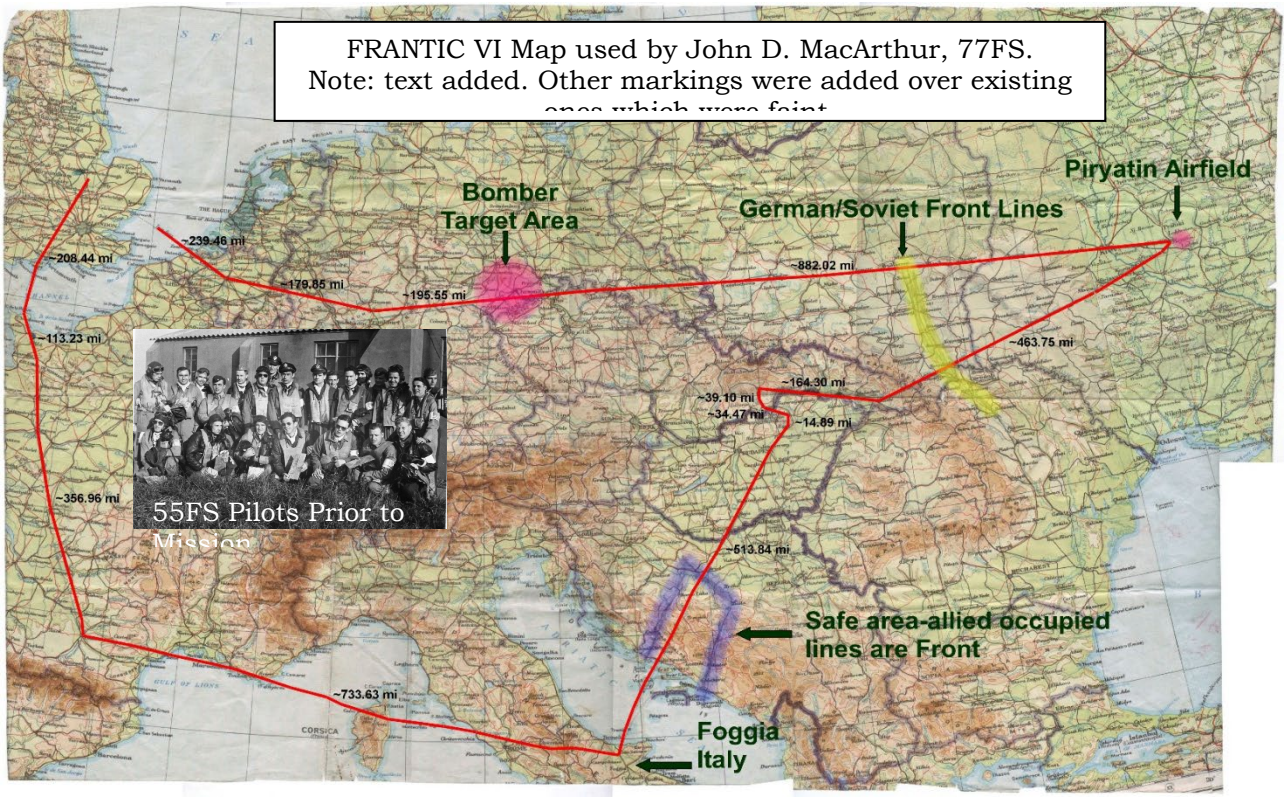
Not surprisingly, negotiating with the ever-suspicious Soviets proved to be a challenge. The US had an additional reason for wanting bases in Russia. It was hoped that improved cooperation with Russia could lead to allied bases in Siberia to allow bombing of Japan. Finally, the Soviets agreed to allow use of three bases in the Ukraine: Mirgorod and Poltava for bombers and Piryatin for escorting fighters. These missions would be named "FRANTIC," commonly referred to as Shuttle Missions. The first mission was on the second of June 1944.

By late July 1944 the 20th Fighter Group had converted to the P-51, which had the range to escort the bombers on a FRANTIC mission. On 11 Sep 1944 the 20th FG was tasked to fly FRANTIC VI to escort bombers hitting targets in the Leipzig area. Nothing was left to chance in the 20th. Much time and discussion were spent on assuring the safety of the pilot's post flight bourbon ration which the pilots would carry with them on the mission. The pilots were able to convince the Flight Surgeon that the flasks needed to be filled right up to the cork to prevent air expansion during flight, after all "safety first." Instructions for pilots for Forced

Landings in Russia, "If possible, stay in your plane until Russians arrive. Make no hostile moves whatsoever. Lock hands over head, when approached. Say "Americansky Poltava" and insist, as well you can on getting in touch with American authorities."



The 20th launched 71 P-51s including seven spares. Six aircraft aborted leaving one spare to return to base. The entire bomber force consisted of 1300 heavy bombers attacking German oil refineries and storage facilities. The 20th would be escorting the last two combat wings of the first force, Third Division B-17s. The lead eight Combat Wings faced one of the greatest air battles to date. One entire group of B-17s (13 aircraft) was lost in five minutes by enemy aircraft, seven more bombers were lost to other causes. Fighters supporting the first force shot down 57 enemy aircraft and destroyed another 26 on the ground. For the 20th's part their bombers saw no resistance from German fighters. Total for the entire mission was 175 enemy aircraft destroyed with a loss of 52 bombers and 32 fighters. Two 20th officers flew on separate B-17s during the mission, Maj Lamke, Group Engineering Officer and Capt. Steiner, Group Intelligence Officer. Capt. Steiner was assigned crew #13B and he insisted it



was not unlucky. He was to man the right waist gunner position. Just prior to takeoff the No. 1 engine's supercharger was acting up. After about 15 minutes Maintenance had it fixed, then No 2 had the same issue. The engine was fixed and they took off one hour late. Since it takes a fair bit of time for the bombers to form up, they were still a go. Just before they crossed into Germany, they had to turn back due to losing too much oil, so 13 was not so lucky. Maj Lamke continued in another B-17.

The 20th's escort was uneventful until the bombers ran into weather at the Russian-German battle lines. Col Rau (20FG/CC) flew a head of the bomber stream to scout a path through the weather. Both the 20th and the bombers forced their way through the weather. The 20th picked up the bombers on the other side of the weather and continued escort to Luck, Poland with the 20th flying on to land in Piryatin, about 80 miles east of Kiev. Although no enemy aircraft were encountered, Lt. Tennant of the 55th was hit by flak over the front lines and bailed out right in the middle of a tank battle. He was able to make his way to an Eastern Command Base in Russia. Lt. Manske, also of the 55th, had fuel trouble and landed at a Russian base. It took some fast talking and a full bottle of bourbon to convince a Russian Colonel to refuel his plane. Manske spent the night as a guest of the Russians and was treated to a dance and steak dinner. Not to be outdone, Lt Horst of the 79th became separated from the squadron in the overcast and was unable to locate Piryatin. He was able to find a Russian airfield but after three failed attempts to land he decided to head further west due to being driven off by a Russian fighter. After 9 hours and 20 minutes of flight time Horst's fuel was exhausted, and he was forced to belly in near a Russian advance base in Poland close to the front lines. Again, the Russian took good care of one of our pilots.

Pilots taking part in the mission had some interesting experiences with our Russian allies. Jack Ilfrey, 79FS, said, "After we landed, the Russians swarmed all over our aircraft examining them minutely and of course we were proud to show off our good P-51D machines. But they reacted just the opposite regarding their own aircraft. A cordon of guards surrounded a few of their vintage planes, plus a couple of our lend lease P-39s and C-47s." Jack went on to describe how they were fed. "The food shipped in by us was served by Russian army girls. While they were buxom and well-built, they could have used a good bath. The Russian officers were under the impression these girls were to keep us company while we were at the base, but we were not used to having women fight and live with us, as the Russians were, and our commanders rejected the offer for us. I am sure however some of the boys were highly entertained… especially after several drinks of that vinegar anti-freeze stuff they called vodka. However, one



79FS's P-51s escort B-17s during FRANTIC.



79FS Pilots with Soviet Youths

normally brave pilot, stud, said, 'Too rugged for me.'"

Jess Yaryan, 79FS, explained, "In the tent area where we slept the Russians had posted a guard but never did relieve him, just left him there. So, to keep from falling asleep he would fire his gun periodically, thus disturbing our sleep and nerves. Supposedly we were not allowed to go off base, but combat fighter pilots were not to be deterred by a little order like that, so we tried to swipe, I mean borrow, a Studebaker (Russian word for all trucks). Unsuccessful in that, we did manage a couple of 4-passenger jeeps, (lend lease - why not?). So, with seven to eight passengers each we made dusty tracks off the base. We had not as yet learned the Russian word for Halt or Stop; don't know if we ever did…. There was not much to see in the town of Piryatin. Dirty, dusty streets, no cars running, no stores open, nothing to buy. All the populace we saw, kids and women were shabbily dressed and looked underfed. But then we must remember the Russian common people had been through hell at the hands of the Germans." (Historian Note: Piryatin had been liberated one year prior on 18 September 1943). Yaryan went on to say, "Curious kids gathered around us and all seemed very polite, offering us rubles for the few things we had on us, candy, gum, cigarettes. They did not beg as the children had done in all the N. African countries I had visited. We wouldn't take the children's money for the things we gave them."

SSgt John Phegley, 44th Sq. Armament recalled talking to an officer who told him of the following event. "A Russian mechanic was working on an aircraft. The canopy was on the ground, and he dropped a wrench which fell and broke the plexiglass. A Russian officer walked up, drew a pistol and shot the fellow. The canopy was worth more than the mechanic."

79FS, Jack Ilfrey (kneeling) & Glenn Webb with Soviet soldiers and female field hands.



On 13 September 1944, the 20th began the second leg of FRANTIC VI. The 20th would escort the 45th Combat Wing-Third Bombardment Division into the target. The bomber force consisted of 75 B-17s from the 96th and 452nd Bomb Groups. The 20th launched 62 aircraft but the bombers arrived at the rendezvous 18 minutes early and had to proceed to the target without the 20th's escort. Fortunately, there was no enemy opposition. The 20th caught up with the bombers at the target, Miskolcz, Hungary, and stayed with the bombers until the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia was reached, again without enemy opposition. The mix up in timing seems to be due to the bomber

planners overestimating the time need for the bombers to form up. This mission had a smaller than usual bomber force which simplified formation.

After withdrawing from the bombers, the 20th continued on to Foggia, Italy landing after a 6 ¼ hour mission. One of the benefits of being the commander was Col Rau was able to travel to Naples where his wife was serving as a WAC. The two had not seen each other in 18 months. The rest of the 20th took part in local wines and other distractions.

The 20th was scheduled to return to England on 15 September but was delayed due to weather. On 17 September the 20th completed the last leg of the FRANTIC mission. Three members could not take off due to mechanical problems, and one had to return to Foggia after take-off with mechanical issues. Lt. Kuemmerle, 77FS, had engine problems and was forced to crash southeast of Paris. The Lt. was not injured and made it back to home base shortly afterwards. For the 20th the Entire FRANTIC VI mission resulted in 20¼ hours of flight time. The flight on the 17th did not count for combat time as it was not over enemy territory.

From Our Members

Midlink 73

Submitted by Roger T. Giles (Tom)

Attached is a fuller readout of the Midlink 73 story discussed in the deployment article in last newsletter (Mike Frederick's). I was on that deployment and wrote the report that ended up at USAF Hq and it created quite a stir (in the attached story). I was an aircraft commander in the 77th and also served as the Wing Scheduler. I was a UH from fall of 1971 to Christmas Eve of 1974. Story is a little long but a lot happened.

By late 1973 our wing had been operating the F-111E in England for two years and we began to see some more loosening of the reins from USAFE Hq, but very little. Despite that, the CINC approved the deployment of a contingent of F-111s from our wing to an annual exercise sponsored by the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). This organization was comprised of Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. The United Kingdom and the United States were Associate Members. One of the annual exercises they were conducting at that time was a maritime exercise called Midlink. This period, of course, was prior to the Iranian Hostage crisis when the American Embassy was taken over by Iranian crowds in 1979 and the extended period of captivity of over 60 embassy personnel. The Shah was still in power in 1973 and our relations were good.

At the time the following occurred I was a Wing Scheduler and still assigned to the 77TFS.

One day in October 1973, I was called to the wing Assistant Director of Operation's (ADO) office. This was a rare occurrence, so I was expecting to hear about some problem or other. But instead, the news was good. USAFE had decided that our wing would participate in CENTO's Midlink 73 exercise and he wanted me as one of the pilots; my WSO for the exercise would come from the wing's Intelligence shop. The exercise would be conducted in the Gulf of Hormuz and we would be flying out of an Iranian air base near Bandar Abbas, Iran. This airfield is right on the southern edge of Iran on the Strait of Hormuz. The exercise portion of our deployment would last only a few days but we were to arrive early to work on a different task. We were to develop and practice maritime surveillance missions using the F-111 and to report on what we learned. He tasked me to write the deployment report when we returned from Bandar Abbas.

All of us selected were excited to be included in the deployment because of its unique nature and we were eager to show off the capabilities of the aircraft. Our deployment was led by the ADO (Col Harris Taylor) and involved six aircraft plus a couple of spare aircrews. The mission planning started well in advance but was complicated by some intransigence on the part of France. The shortest route was to overfly France but we were surprised to learn they would not allow it; surprised because they had been allowing us to fly low level routes in their country routinely since our arrival. We never heard why—international politics I suspect.

The most direct route after we arrived at eastern end of the Med would have been to overfly Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, but even if that could have been worked out diplomatically under normal circumstances, the Arab-Israeli war broke out in October of 1973. Egypt and Syria attacked Israel, with Iraq and other Arab nations supporting them but without direct involvement. This development also precluded an alternate and somewhat less direct route over Syria and Iraq.

We ultimately flew non-stop from Upper Heyford to Bandar Abbas on a route that took us south of France, over northern Spain and then eastward through the Mediterranean, south of Sicily and north of Cyprus, and then into southern Turkey. From there the route stayed clear of the northern border of Syria, but south of Iran's capitol Tehran, until we could turn southeast and fly directly to Bandar Abbas. This route covered about 3,500 miles so we had air refueling support to ensure we always had enough fuel to divert to an alternate field in case of aircraft emergencies, or encountered adverse weather conditions when we arrived at Bandar Abbas.

Eventually we had our diplomatic clearances in hand, our shots and passports were up to date, and the mission to Bandar Abbas thoroughly planned; we would leave on 23 November. The day before we departed we briefed the mission as a group and the ADO gave his final instructions on the mission. Timing was important because of our air traffic control clearances, the tanker schedule, and the fact that we needed to land in daylight at Bandar Abbas. This was a new facility that still needed some work and while the runway was amazing, they had yet to install runway lights. Landing after dark was not an option. With these considerations in mind the ADO said if one of us had a significant aircraft problem at takeoff time, or had to abort on the runway or

during the departure, he would not wait for them to get another aircraft, so don't ask. That aircrew would have to stay home. There were air spares available to fill in as needed. Of course all of us selected to make the trip did not want to be denied going at the last minute, and based on the excellent aircraft selected for the mission we expected no problems in that area.

Our flight to Iran took eight hours but it went by fairly quickly. Our particular flight of two had no problems enroute but one aircraft in another flight of two had to divert to Tehran for an emergency. The problem was caused by the aircraft's pilot who was a squadron operations officer, a Lt Col with lots of experience, who should have known better. Somewhere over Iran he got a fire light on one of the engines, declared an emergency with air traffic control, and diverted to Tehran. A maintenance team was sent in from Upper Heyford to identify and fix the problem. It turned out he had placed some object(s) under his seat and when later he moved the seat down some wiring got crunched. One of the wires was part of the engine fire warning system and a fire warning signal was sent to the indicator on the pilot's forward panel. There was specific guidance in the Dash One to never place any objects under the seats; he did and it bit him in the butt. This is the kind of high profile incident no individual wants have, especially one who is part of the unit leadership. After a couple of days he and his WSO joined us at Bandar Abbas with the aircraft. This would not be the last bonehead act we were to witness while there.

The ADO and I were the first flight to arrive at Bandar Abbas but when he called the tower for approval to land he got no response. Even after we were adjacent to the runway at traffic pattern altitude he got no response. They knew we were coming and we were on time. Frustrated with the tower's inattention he made a hard break right and in a descending turn buzzed the runway below the height of the tower to get their attention. I immediately followed suit and it must have been a sight to see two camouflaged F-111E's screaming down the runway at low altitude; we finally got their attention. We got our approval to land, followed shortly by the other incoming flights.

The rest of the deployment team had arrived before us on a C-130 and our crew chiefs were waiting for us. The two additional flight crews also came down on the same C-130 along with some minimal maintenance support and supplies. One of our wing's flight surgeons made the trip with us for medical support. USAFE had also arranged for a very small Army mobile communications unit to be on site with a high-frequency radio so we could communicate with the USAFE Headquarters, our command post at Upper Heyford, and if necessary, with us when we were flying out of UHF range. We were housed in a nice hotel on the beach not too far from the airbase. We were warned by the flight surgeon, however, to stay out of the Gulf as raw sewage was being dumped into the Gulf not far from the hotel. The hotel food was very good and the hotel had a pool, but while we did not swim in the pool we did work on our tans when not at the airbase.

In 1973, the nearby town of Bandar Abbas was not very big, about 20-25,000; they have a large naval base located there. There was a small town near the base.

Historically the area was very isolated from the rest of Iran and the climate very hot. We were told that in earlier times convicted criminals were sent there but not imprisoned since you could not successfully escape overland as there was no way to survive the large desert and heat. But it would seem that if you could arrange a boat you could escape by water. In 1973, they had a no-kidding prison there and the flight surgeon volunteered his services and visited the prison. He said the conditions in the prison were pretty bad and he treated those he could while we were there. He reported that many of the prisoners were women who were serving sentences for a crime they did not commit. It was the custom that a man convicted of a crime could send his wife, or perhaps a daughter or sister, to serve out his sentence.

On the second day after our arrival we had the first of our maritime surveillance and area orientation flights. There had been some discussions around this time that the USAF could make a contribution to the maritime surveillance role. The B-52 was talked about because it had very long range and could carry a variety of weapons should that be required. The F-111 was a good candidate as it had an excellent inertial navigation system, excellent radar, reasonably long range without refueling, and could extend for hours with aerial refueling. Further, because of our faster speed we could cover a lot of water in our time on task. So our goal on this deployment was to get some initial experience with this potential mission and report on what we learned. Each of us flew a couple of three-hour sorties over the next few days. We were successful on the two missions I went on. We went out over the Gulf as a flight of two at medium altitude. The weather was clear and the visibility pretty good but there was always a sea haze. The pilot had to be very careful not to rely solely on looking out at the horizon to maintain his attitude because the horizon line was blurred by the dust and sea haze. You could not easily tell where the sky stopped and the Gulf started.

We were able to cover a lot of water in those three hours and we did find some ships and a submarine of interest. Using the radar the WSO would look for returns, especially isolated ones. We saw a few oil tankers but ignored them. When we found something of interest we could descend, check out the radar return, and climb back to our cruising altitude pretty quickly. My WSO and I found a Soviet ship well away from shore that looked like a small supply ship but more likely was a signals intelligence ship as it had antennae all over it. We had been directed by USAFE to not come closer than 500 feet either vertically or horizontally and we adhered to that admonition, but we did make a few low passes by it and my WSO got some excellent photos. Either on this flight or another a couple of days later he photographed a Soviet submarine diving and caught it with the conning tower just about to go under; the outline of the body of the sub could be seen just under the surface.

Using coordinates from the INS we could pinpoint the location of these sightings and log it with the time of the sighting. There was a US Navy P-3 at the base and our WSOs shared all of our findings with them. The P-3 folks said they had been looking for this submarine for some time and were glad to have the info we provided. One of the other crews found a Soviet destroyer and got excellent pictures. Both the submarine and the ships we found may well have been in the area to observe and obtain intelligence from

the upcoming CENTO exercise, of which they were not a part. I have copies of the photos of the destroyer, submarine, and "supply" ship.

I also have a photo of the US Navy carrier "Hancock" taken as we passed abeam on one of several passes we made. The Hancock was in the Gulf but was not there to support the exercise. As mentioned in Mike Frederick's story, T. C Gilkeson and Mike found out the Hancock was in the Gulf from a Navy P-3 crew and got info for us to fly a carrier low approach on our second surveillance sortie. So at one point on our second surveillance flight with T. C as flight lead, we approached the carrier and contacted the ship for a radar-controlled approach to the ship. We each flew an approach without the other aircraft on our wing. And then had the opportunity to perform a couple of fly-by's for us to check out the ship and for those on the ship to check us out; gave them a little break in their routine. The approach to landing went pretty quickly and some of that is due to the perception the pilot gets as he watches the runway get bigger and, based on his experience, unconsciously gauges how close the landing spot is. Since we were used to landing on runways 8-10,000 feet long the carrier's landing deck looked further away than it was. The Hancock's deck was about 890 feet long and I can assure you that it looks very small when you are approaching at a very low angle. The approach went well but sooner than I expected it was time to go-around as the approach was completed. The Hancock was built and used late in WWII and also used in Vietnam. She was sold for scrap in 1976.

We also added some gray hairs to the head of the ADO on this mission. As I mentioned earlier, the air base at Bandar Abbas did not yet have lighting for night operations and that included runway lights. Our flight was the last one that day and we were cutting it close to be back before dark. As the sun got lower and lower, the ADO tried to raise us on UHF radio and the very much longer range HF radio; he was unable. We never heard any of his radio calls. He didn't know if we were lost, had crashed at sea, or just had radio problems. Flight lead did not call in until we were close to landing and that was for landing instructions. It was nearly dark when we landed and we knew we were cutting it too close. The ADO let us know we had him worried but said no more about it.

We Got Our Tails Crunched!

A few days before the exercise was to begin several of us were at the base standing outside of our little deployment ops area when we saw an Iranian C-130 transport taxiing from an area near where our F-111s were parked in a row. For some reason the pilot of the C-130 decided to taxi behind our aircraft to get to the taxiway that ran parallel to the active runway so he could take off. Although the small ramp was crowded there was a better route available to him than the one he took. He decided to taxi behind our aircraft where there was barely enough room for his aircraft between the tails or our aircraft and the edge of the concrete ramp. To our eyes it looked to be unsafe and it was. As he got behind the first F-111 it was even more obvious to us that this was not a good idea. But he pressed on taxiing very slowly and inching past the first couple of F-111s. Then to our utter amazement his right wing took a chunk out of

the tail of one of our aircraft. Then two more birds took the same hit. We expected him to stop but he just barreled through and then turned right down the parallel taxiway and kept going. Watching all of this with us was an Iranian AF colonel who became nearly apoplectic with shock and anger. He hopped into his jeep and raced after the C-130, which did not stop until the colonel's jeep stopped in front of it.

In the meantime we ran over to our aircraft to examine the damage. Three aircraft each had a large bite out of the plane's rudder the thickness of the C-130's wing tip. The ADO called back to Upper Heyford and told them the bad news. Fortunately, only the movable rudder was damaged and not the vertical stabilizer that held it. Arrangements were made to send a team of additional maintenance personnel and three rudders to replace our damaged ones. The repairs were quickly made, the aircraft were checked out, and we were able to participate in the exercise as planned; all of this was accomplished within a few days. Those maintenance personnel performed a very impressive recovery effort from a near catastrophe.

CENTO Task Force Gets Waxed

The scenario for the exercise called for our F-111's to be the Red Force (the bad guys) and the CENTO task force was the Blue Force (the good guys). It was our job as the aggressors to find and attack the task force. The Blue force was defended by Iranian AF F-4 Phantoms purchased from the US. The naval task force was led by a US Navy command ship the USS LaSalle, home-ported in Bahrain. Because of that (and other reasons) she was painted white to reflect the sun and reduce heat absorption; she really stood out at sea. Also included in the task force were other US Navy, Iranian, and Pakistani ships numbering about five or six; at least two were destroyers. There were evaluators and referees for the exercise on board the ships and one of them debriefed the results at the close of the exercise.

Each flight of two F-111E's was scheduled a specific 30-minute block of time for the attack. We were not told where the task force was; it was our job to find them and execute the mock attacks. However, once our force found them they would not be too far away from last reported position during our time blocks. We were prohibited from flying below 1,000 feet within a few miles of the task force and we were cautioned that there could be helicopter operations up to about 500 feet. If we were able to get past the defending F-4s, the ships could "fire" on us indicated by flashing lights from the ship.

It was pretty obvious that without the use of some reasonable tactics on our part they would see us coming and be prepared to "shoot us down." Our thinking was as follows: We did not know if the task force knew what our time blocks were but it was obvious that the Iranian AF would know when we took off from their airfield and this would give them and the task force a window to expect us. The defending aircraft and ships would know from which direction we were coming and could have their F-4s in position to attack us when in range. They also used their ground-based air defense radar to direct the F-4s to intercept, but as we discovered in the debrief it was not helpful.

Taking these factors into consideration we capitalized on our aircraft's capabilities.

On my mission to attack the task force our flight of two (again T.C was flight lead) took off and rather than head directly to the ships' location, roughly south of the base, we headed east at low altitude and kept some low mountains between us and the task force to get well clear of the area and not be tracked by surface radar. Then we turned south, and still at low altitude (about a 1,000 feet) flew east of the probable location of the task force until we were sure we were southeast of their location and then turned northwest. This tactic gave us the best chance of not being detected either by radar or visually until we arrived at the task force. As we approached their suspected position, but still well away (50-60 miles) we popped up a few thousand feet very briefly so our radar could pick up their location and lock the coordinates into our computer, and then descended quickly back to about 500 feet to avoid being seen. With the target's coordinates identified and locked into the computer we had the range and direction to the force presented to us in the cockpit. We just flew to that location until we thought we could acquire them visually. We were hoping they were looking for us north of their position and that our pop-up maneuver had been brief enough that they did not pick us up on radar.

When we were within just a few miles we picked them up visually, and then just short of the low-altitude restricted zone around the task force we popped up to 1,000 feet and started our attack. We were astonished that we had made it this far without any indication they had seen us. We were over the task force before there was any reaction and it came too late to have prevented our weapons release if we had actually been hostile aircraft. As I approached one of the destroyers I made a hard turn over the ship at 1,000 feet and got a good look while their lights were flashing. Our attack over, we turned north and returned to base. All of us reported successful attacks.

The day after the exercise terminated the evaluators debriefed the whole exercise to the representatives of the CENTO members. The debrief was held in a very large auditorium at the Iranian Navy's main naval base located at the city of Bandar Abbas several miles away. Our ADO was to represent our deployment at the meeting but he told me to attend the debrief in his stead. An Iranian AF Brigadier General was tasked to escort the ADO to the debrief and to pick him up in a staff car. When only I showed up he was not pleased and politely but firmly expressed his displeasure to me and told me to pass it on to the colonel. Nonetheless his driver took us both to the debrief.

As stated, the auditorium was very large with theater seats numbering in the hundreds. I estimate there were over 50 generals and admirals of all the participating nations there, and perhaps some invited observer nations. In all there were a couple hundred folks for the debrief. The briefing was conducted by one of the evaluators who went over the whole exercise and laid out the good and the bad. I was pleased to hear that they saw what we experienced—we made unhindered attacks on the task force that would have been very damaging in reality. One of the comments by the briefer was particularly illuminating and showed both the effectiveness of our simple tactics and the ineffectiveness of their air defense effort. He said the Iranian interceptor pilots

complained that we F-111 pilots were cheating by "hiding under the P-3 aircraft" and we therefore could not be identified on radar and attacked, of course we were never even near the P-3s. Clearly, they never saw us on ground-based radar, their aircraft's radar, or visually; the only aircraft they ever found was the P-3.

I do not recall what was said about the fact that we were also never discovered by the naval task force itself until we were on top of them. They were all equipped with radar and should have had lookouts during their most vulnerable periods but we never saw any indication on our equipment that we were seen by radar; nor were there any attempts by them to jam our radar.

The ADO had explained to me that he did not want to attend the debrief in order to be fully rested for leading our aircraft back to Upper Heyford the next day, and since I was going to be writing our deployment report anyway, I should attend. Similarly, he did not attend the reception and buffet that evening hosted by the Iranians. He did not want to be put in a position of eating something at the reception that would make him ill for the upcoming flight home. I didn't think that would be a problem but he was the boss. In any case, since I had flown one of the aircraft down I would not be flying an aircraft back to Upper Heyford. The two spare crews who flew on the C-130 coming down would each fly an F-111 back, and me and my WSO, and another crew who flew an F-111 down would have to go back on the C-130 carrying the maintenance and communications personnel and equipment. So I and a few others went to the reception and enjoyed the buffet. The food was very good and the centerpiece of the offerings was a baked, whole lamb. I had at least a taste of much of what was there, including the lamb.

The next day the C-130 arrived, the equipment was loaded and we departed Bandar Abbas in the afternoon. Our route was essentially the reverse of the route we took going to Bandar Abbas, albeit traveling somewhat slower. By the time we took off I was not feeling very well and pretty soon it was obvious that the colonel had made the right decision. My intestinal distress was increasing and I felt not well at all; I blamed it on the lamb. For those of you who do not know, the toilet facilities on a C-130 are spartan to say the least. There was one small commode not unlike a camp commode behind a canvas curtain at the front of the cargo/passenger area. The rest of the aircraft was pretty full with personnel and equipment. In consideration of my fellow passengers I decided to fight the urge to use the facilities as long as I could. A few hours into the flight the C-130 crew chief told us that we would make an unplanned stop at a Turkish AF airbase at Diyabakir, Turkey, for fuel before going on to our planned overnight stay at Incirlik Air Base at Adana, Turkey. The pilot said that they did not refuel at Bandar Abbas for fear of getting contaminated fuel. Obviously he did not take into account that we had been using that fuel source for nearly two weeks without concern or incident.

Although this meant our arrival time at Adana would be extended by a few hours, I was okay with that for obvious reasons. We had been on the C-130 for three or four hours so the break was welcomed by all. By the time we landed at Diyabakir it was late afternoon with fading light. We could see some old and not well maintained US-made

F-100s of the Turkish AF here and there. While our aircraft was being refueled we went into the base operations building. (Several of us made a beeline to the toilet facilities!) It was like stepping back in time, not unlike my experience at Clark Air Base in the Philippines, only more so. The walls were a dirty, light brown and here and there were framed posters of Disney characters that looked to be of the 1940s vintage, and had been there since that time. On a counter was a three-foot tall samovar that badly needed a polish, surrounded by the typical small tea glasses. The tea was hot and tasty, however. We all milled around while we waited and then I wandered outside and my " Twilight Zone" experience became even more vivid. A Turkish AF C-47 (DC-3) had arrived and parked in front of the building while I was inside and was just beginning to start its engines to depart again as I emerged. It was silhouetted against a mostly dark sky with a slice of a salmon-colored sunset showing behind it. Then the pilot started his left engine and the whine and cough of the engine start, and the blue flame blowing out of the engine exhaust ports, was right out of scores of WWII movies, including "Casablanca." I stood there watching and listening, and soaking up the atmosphere, as the other engine started and the aircraft taxied away…. then the sounds faded.

Now refreshed and refueled we climbed back onto the C-130 and flew about another hour to Incirlik for our RON. Unlike Bandar Abbas, it felt more like a December in Europe, it was pretty cool out but the skies were clear. We had some time the next day so some of us went into town to experience the bazaar. It was crowded and noisy, just like the movie scenes and documentaries show them to be. Back at the base we had a chance to talk with some USAF F-4 crewmembers who were there on rotation from somewhere, I believe from the US, and then we were finally were on our way home and glad to be so.

Our Deployment Report Makes Waves

When I got back I wrote up the deployment report, the ADO approved it, and it was forwarded to the office at USAFE Hq, responsible for our deployment. The ADO told me they liked the report, made no changes, slapped their name on it and sent it on to the Air Staff at the Pentagon. A few weeks later I got a call from the ADO to come see him right away. He told me that our report on the deployment had created quite a brouhaha between the AF and the Navy. Continuing, he said that General David Jones, CINC/USAFE, had directed him to come to the headquarters and personally explain to him how the deployment went and essentially defend our report.

Obviously, after the action officer(s) at AF Headquarters had read the report it was sent up the chain to the DCS/Operations, Lt Gen "Dutch" Huyser, my old wing commander from Kincheloe AFB. He discussed it with his counterpart from the Navy during an Operations Deputies (OpsDeps) meeting in the Tank. And, I suspect he took the opportunity to underline how well we had done against this naval force. The Tank is the name given to the room the Joint Chiefs of Staff and/or their OpsDeps meet to raise, be briefed on, and/or discuss issues relevant to all the services and US military policy. Subsequently, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt either read

or was otherwise informed of the report's content and his, and the operations side of Navy headquarters, position was that we lied. This response was relayed back to Gen Jones and he decided to hear first hand our side of the story.

The report covered the whole deployment from beginning to end and normally it would have received nothing more than business-as-usual attention. However, I believe our report got more attention for two reasons; the results or our maritime surveillance experiment and the results of our participation in the CENTO exercise. The results of the surveillance segment would have gotten some attention because it could become another role for the AF but would encroach on a mission traditionally a Navy role. As to our veracity on this task, we had photographic proof of our successes in the maritime surveillance flights and comments by the US Navy's P-3 personnel in the area. The exercise results, on the other hand, were more controversial in that what we reported could be seen as highlighting US Navy shortcomings, at least the shortcomings of the ability of this task force to protect itself. The report laid out how we were able to sneak up on the task force without being discovered until we were on top of them and noted that we saw no evidence of radar searches or electronic jamming. This was in addition to never being intercepted by the Iranian AF, which of course was not the US Navy's fault.

The ADO said he was due in Gen Jones' office in three days and he wanted me and my WSO on the deployment (Capt Perkins) to go along. Further, Gen Jones had directed the ADO to bring him a tape recording of the ADO narrating the key elements of the deployment report with the goal of supporting what we reported, and refuting the charge that we had lied in the report. Capt Perkins and I wrote a script for the ADO to narrate and record before we left for USAFE Hq. We took two F-111s to Ramstein and soon found ourselves in the CINC's outer office. The ADO asked to bring me into the CINC's office with him but it was denied. Within a few minutes he was ushered into the *sanctum sanctorum* carrying the tape while we waited without. I didn't hear any yelling or pounding on the desk so I thought it must be going okay. After more than 30 minutes the ADO emerged with his skin intact and said the meeting went fine. The CINC thanked him for his information and kept the tape. We returned to Upper Heyford not knowing what was next in this saga. We heard later that Gen Jones sent the tape to Gen Huyser who forwarded it to the Navy and Adm Zumwalt. We never heard any more about it. We assumed vindication; at least Gen Jones and Lt Gen Huyser were convinced. I would like to think that our experiences and the report, and the high level attention it got, contributed to operational changes for our naval forces at sea and increased the impetus to improve their equipment for handling low-altitude aircraft and missile threats.

The Story of 68-0003 Crash

By Bob Gregory

As F-111 crewmembers, we had always been told the capsule was designed to float. We had even seen films and photos showing an F-111 capsule floating in water during static tests. Additionally, capsule design features included emergency handles a crewmember could pull to separate the chute from the capsule after landing and to initiate a sequence that fired an explosive chord on the bottom of the capsule to blow off a panel and deploy a set of flotation bags to help stabilize the capsule floating in the water. The far thinking engineers even made it possible to use the control stick as a bilge pump to remove water from the capsule after it was floating in an upright position. They also provided 10 minutes of force-fed oxygen in case of a high-altitude ejection or water landing. Because of the "proven" ability for the capsule to float, our senior leadership decided F-111 crew members were not required to wear their life preserve units (LPUs) during training missions. This decision led to the LPUs being stored in zippered pouches behind each seat for easy access when needed. It's worth noting that our accident was the sixth F-111 lost due to a bird strike and, as detailed below, things don't always go as planned.

For starters one side of Jim's inertial reel malfunctioned, which resulted in his back being twisted when the rocket motor fired. Second, the design engineers failed to test how the capsule would float when half of the windshield was gone. Third, they failed to consider a single floatation airbag could not right the extra weight of the capsule when filled with water. In our case, as soon as we hit the water a very small wave lapped over the rail at the far-right front corner where the windshield had been. Within seconds water was pouring in all along the six feet of exposed area on my side of the capsule. In the time it took me to release my single-point seat harness, my G-suit connector and my quick-release oxygen hose, the capsule was totally submerged, and we had rolled upside down. Compounding our problems, the force of ejection and/or landing sheared a screw in the forced-fed oxygen system. Without having force-fed oxygen after landing, we were left with holding our breath while under water. For unknown reasons the emergency radio beacon in the F-111 capsule also failed to activate. As a result, when the U.S. Air Force Range Officer at Wainfleet saw the fireball and smoke several miles from the range tower, he had no idea that we had safely ejected. His first response was to close the range and notify the nearest RAF base where rescue helicopters were located. He also made the initial phone call to the Upper Heyford command post to let them know what was happening.

Jim and I were not aware of it at the time, but several critical things happened regarding when and where we landed. As for the "when," a 22-foot tide in that area had just started to come in. Although we were a quarter of a mile offshore, we had landed on top of a narrow sandbar that was four to five feet below the surface. As a result, when the capsule rolled upside down the bottom of the capsule was barely exposed. I exited out the hole in the right side of the cockpit, crawled up on the bottom of the capsule, and started reaching over the side. While waiting for me to exit, Steebs tried to pull the manual parachute release handle but only managed to bend the metal pin in his direction versus pull it out straight. He next found the handle to activate

the auxiliary floatation bags located on the bottom of the capsule; however, he could not get a good grip because the leather pad on his flight glove was wet and slippery. It was very fortunate for me that this last effort failed because by that time I was laying across the plate that would have been blown off with an explosive cord if he had succeeded. Jim's seat harness and G-suit disconnected as advertised; however, the quick release on his oxygen hose would not break loose. While holding his breath and with his helmet and oxygen mask still on, he started to go across the right seat when he momentarily got his foot caught in the ejection handle. Before he could get out of the capsule, he also had to use his neck muscles to break the 90-pound nylon cord that ran on the inside of his oxygen hose. With his oxygen hose still attached to his helmet, he went in the direction he thought was up and touched the sandbar. After he turned around, he found that his oxygen mask would not stretch far enough to allow him to break the surface. I was leaning over the capsule when I saw a very faint white glow come up and stop several inches below the surface of the water. Reaching down into the water I was able to break the bayonet clip assembly off of the left side of his helmet and pulled Steebs onto the bottom of the capsule.

A fisherman in a small, 1-man boat heading into the Boston port for the night saw the fireball, followed by what he described as a "coffin" suspended below a parachute. After starting to turn his boat in our direction he saw the capsule hit the water. In his words, he then saw one person, soon followed by another, come up and "stand on the water." Adding to his frightened (and somewhat confused) state of mind, by the time the fishing boat reached our position, burning pieces of aircraft debris were starting to float by the capsule. Jim, who was a smoker at the time, later said he wished his cigarettes were not totally soaked because he could have easily reached out and lit up from the burning debris.

When the fisherman reached our position, his boat hit the submerged capsule and knocked Jim back into the water. As quickly as he could get us on board he turned and started away from the crash site. At the time we asked him to attach a buoy to the capsule, but he was not interested in sticking around any longer than absolutely necessary. On our way to the port city of Boston, we transferred to a larger fishing boat, captioned by Roy Bagley. The new boat had a radio to communicate with the harbor master and, through relay, to the nearest RAF base. Shortly after we changed boats, a RAF rescue helicopter from RAF Coltishall arrived overhead and, through more radio relays, asked if we wanted to be winched up and flown to the RAF base. By that time, we were in a narrow shipping channel with high power lines on both sides of the channel. After what we had been through, we quickly declined the offer and stayed on the fishing boat.

The newspaper article also mentioned the aircrew escaped uninjured. In Jim's case, the Air Force flight surgeons initially determined that his only injury from the accident consisted of a five percent compression fracture of the T8 vertebra. Although his recovery was very painful, he was cleared for flight status after a 60-day recuperation period. However, it was later determined he suffered a broken neck

vertebral process, a ruptured disk in the neck, four compression fractured vertebrae, and disc damage in the lower back. To fix his problems, Air Force surgeons went in through his mouth and dissolved a disk in his neck—effectively reseating his head to his spinal column. After his recovery he became the first Air Force pilot to be flight certified following such an operation. The only stipulation was that he was prohibited from flying aircraft equipped with an ejection seat. Jim transitioned to VIP aircraft and continued to fly until his retirement as a Colonel in 1994. He then flew as a Captain with Southwest Airlines until his final retirement in 2013. Unfortunately, Jim passed away the following year after a 28-year battle with non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

Follow-on Submitted by Nick Forder, Heritage Manager

After recovery the escape capsule became a training aid for the 67th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron based at RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk. An HH-3E helicopter would position the capsule and turn on a homing beacon and then a search pattern would be initiated to locate and recover the capsule.

When the F-111 was retired from service with USAFE there was no longer a need to train with the capsule. The 67th ARRS had been involved with the installation of a memorial to mark the crash site of 79th TFS F-111E 68-0003 on the west side of Craignaw Hill in Scotland. The project to install the memorial had been instigated by the Dumfries & Galloway Aviation Museum and so that museum was offered the capsule.

The capsule was displayed outside for many years with museum volunteers both repainting it and installing solid replacement plexiglass. It was used as a prop in a sci-fi film also.

Following a review of collections the capsule was offered on loan to the RAF Upper Heyford Heritage Centre and arrived back at Heyford on 1 June 2026. It is now on display in Shelter 9 (Building 3009) in the former Victor Alert/QRA. The capsule was stripped of its interior fittings for use by the 67th ARRS. Sourcing and installing the missing components is one of the options under discussion with the Dumfries & Galloway Aviation Museum. If you can help with components and/or are UK-based please get in touch with us at uhheritage@outlook.com







CPT. JAMES E. STIEBER



77 TFS, CAPTS BOB GREGORY & DAN BROWN
RAF UPPER HEYFORD, DEC 1973

The Wingman Newspaper,

Submitted by Ross Stewart

Wingman



The 20th fighter bomber wing arrived at RAF Wethersfield in 1952 and, it would be two

more years before the unit bi-weekly newspaper published volume 1, edition 1 on August 9th 1954 with the opening statement written by Colonel Dunning. Around 420 editions later, the last copy printed was an eight page special with the closing and farewell statement by Colonel Hagemann on April 17th 1970. In all, nine commanders would use the paper to communicate their bi-weekly message.

Wethersfield Airfield Museum has on display over eighty Wingman's of which some are originals, and a few are copies. The collection is an important reference tool along with the 1953- and 1959-year books as most visitors with relatives from the 20th hope to find a photo, story or mention of their relative or even themselves in our archive. In many cases, a piece of information found in an article can help to build a better picture of where they worked or as is often the case, see they were in one of The Raiders sports teams being either football, baseball, basketball and more. If we are lucky enough to find a photo, it's often the only photo the family might have of them in uniform. Wethersfield Airfield Museums public Facebook group often highlights individual articles and, on the RAF Wethersfield, private newspapers.


'...Victory By Valor...'

Wing Pauses, Reflects Upon Its Departure

Wingman

20th TACTICAL FIGHTER WING

SOUVENIR EDITION

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 1970

20th Tactical Fighter Wing Boasts Proud Heritage In 40 Years Service

Colonel Hagemann Bids Wing, Essex Farewell

Wethersfield Started As Satellite

World War Pilots Earn Nickname In Combat

Four Of Original Cadre Here Again

10th Anniversary Of 20th TF


WINGMAN

Vol. 1 No.1

20th FIGHTER BOMBER WING

MONDAY AUGUST 9 1954

NEW PAPER SERVES WING

20TH SPOTLIGHTS SAFETY

GROUND SAFETY BECOMES ALL-OUT ISSUE

M & S GROUP OPEN FIRST RETAIL STORE

COL. DUNNING WELCOMES NEW WING TABLOID

Ex Border Patrolman Now PM

PROMOTION QUOTAS REVEALED

Raiders Begin Practice

NEW WORDS

12 Month Countdown!

2027 20th FWA Reunion
New Orleans, LA
30 Sept – 2 Oct

I have locked in the dates for our Reunion with the Copland Comfort Inn in Metairie LA. Working on menu items for Thursday Buffett and Saturday Banquet. Guest Speaker will be Lt Gen (Ret) Ralph Jodice. I will provide Ralph's Bio as we get closer to event.



Reunion registrations and hotel reservation information will be provided well in advance of event via newsletter and member email. **Expect hotel reservations and reunion registration to open up in Dec.**

If you would like to volunteer to help me, just send me (Gino) an email. I sure could use the help. I will work out what I need as we get closer to the event.

The Copland Tower Conference Center will provide the following:

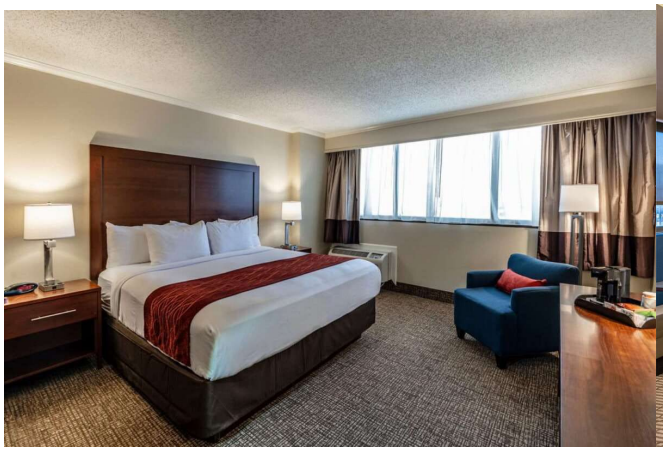
Deluxe King or Double Queens ($146.88 per night all-inclusive of taxes and fees)
Or King Junior Suite ($181,30 per night all-inclusive of taxes and fees)
Complimentary Wi-Fi
Rates available 3 days +/_ event dates (29 Sept – 3 Oct)
Hot breakfast served in hotel breakfast area included
Complementary car and truck parking

Get more info at their website at www.choicehotels.com/louisiana/metarie/comfort-inn-hotels/la375.











Enjoy all the excitement of New Orleans while getting your rest away from the hustle and bustle of the BIG EASY. Centrally located 15 minutes away from both the airport and downtown New Orleans, we are in the perfect location for business and leisure travelers alike. Within walking distance, you will find supermarkets, over 20 restaurants, and endless shopping opportunities at the largest tax-free mall in Louisiana. With 156 professionally appointed guest rooms, 95 luxurious Executive One-Bedroom Suites, a full-service Café and Bar, in addition to over 15,000 feet in banquet space, we are well equipped to accommodate groups and events of any kind and size. If honored with your business, we will extend every effort to ensure that your

stay with us is a "Landmark Experience". This full-service Convention Hotel. All rooms include coffeemakers, hairdryers, irons/boards, voice mail, Microwave, Mini Refrigerator, and in-room safes. Complimentary parking. Heated outdoor seasonal pool. Fitness room. Located one block from shopping, restaurants, and the parade route. On-Site catering featuring the Mardi Gras Ballroom (8832 sq. ft.).

DOES THE ASSOCIATION FADE A WAY IN 2028? WE NEED FOUR MEMBERS TO STEP UP AND KEEP US GOING, PLEASE!

As you are aware the current slate of board members agreed at 2025 reunion to remain in their positions until the reunion in 2027. That was 10 months ago! No one has come forward to take on any of the positions available.

Gentlemen, if we arrive at the 2027 reunion with no boards members, then the association will be dissolved and cease to exist. It would be a crime, after some 35 years, to see the 20th FWA resolve into history.

Please give this some thoughts. Talk to your friends. Step forward and help the organization. Take your pick of positions. President, V-P, Secretary, Treasurer, Chaplain, 2029 Reunion Chairman. Let's keep our association alive for future generations.

The positions only take a few hours a year to complete and it is not hard work for such an elite group of folks. This is our heritage don't let it collect dust but keep it viable for current active-duty members, alumni and friends. The current Board will assist all volunteers in assuming their duties.

Contact any of the board members if you interested.


WE NEED
YOU