

IX. The Seventies (1970-1979)

The war in Vietnam dragged on into the early part of the seventies, with the United States still heavily involved. Seventh Fleet carriers and aircraft units saw most of the Navy's air action during the conflict.

Naval Air combat operations were aided by new weapons, such as the *Walleye* television glide bomb



The war in Vietnam spilled over into the 1970s. *Ranger* is shown on *Yankee Station* in the Gulf of Tonkin.

which automatically homes in on a target. Helicopters proved their value by serving as aerial gunships and flying freight trains. During Operation *Market Time*, land-based patrol aircraft provided valuable support by scanning the South Vietnamese coastline to locate enemy vessels and alert surface forces for interception.

Seventh Fleet aircraft executed the most extensive aerial mining operation in history, blockading the enemy's main supply routes. Naval Aviation's efforts in this regard may well have been the deciding factor in bringing the hostilities to an end. An uneasy truce finally resulted in U.S. disengagement and the return of American prisoners of war in 1973.

Naval Air throughout the seventies was plagued by a material inventory decline which began after the Vietnamese war. Defense spending was curtailed because of the high inflation rate oppressing the world's industrial nations. Nevertheless, Naval Aviation continued to make progress in the areas of research and development.

In the early 1970s, the Navy introduced the F-14 *Tomcat*, and the Marine Corps accepted the AV-8 V/STOL *Harrier*. Additions to the fleet of the new S-3A *Viking* and the light airborne multipurpose system (LAMPS) — combining shipboard electronics with the SH-2D helicopter to extend the ranges of shipboard ASW and antiship missile defense systems — were intended to withstand the ever-increasing submarine threat. Later in the decade, two more nuclear-powered supercarriers, *Nimitz* and *Eisenhower*, were commissioned and a new fighter/

attack aircraft, the F/A-18 *Hornet*, underwent flight trials.

Naval Air power continued to play a major part in U.S. Navy fleet operations during this decade. In 1975, aviation units assisted in the evacuation of civilian refugees fleeing the North Vietnamese takeover of South Vietnam. Four years later, the Navy's air arm helped rescue thousands of Indochinese "boat people" who took to the seas to escape mounting Communist tyranny. Later in 1979, air elements were called upon for a show of strength during periods of tension in Cuba, Iran and Afghanistan.

Throughout the seventies, U.S. dependence on foreign oil sources reemphasized the country's reliance upon the Navy to keep sea lanes open and commerce moving. With aviation ships and aircraft integrated into the fleet, U.S. naval power was able to accomplish this task.

The modern supercarriers deployed troops and equipment virtually anywhere in the world. Carrier-based antisubmarine aircraft and shore-based patrol

PHC Davis



K 84668

planes continued to guard our strike forces against the undersea menace, while fighter and attack aircraft provided protection from the enemy air threat. Helicopters expanded their role as vital extensions of Naval Aviation with missions encompassing search and rescue, vertical replenishment, medical evacuations, personnel and cargo lift, antisubmarine warfare, minesweeping and reconnaissance. These missions, combined with the Marine Corps' close air support of ground troops, gave the U.S. unequalled strength in sea and air operations.

As the seventies drew to a close, Naval Aviation had further secured its place as a dynamic and effective element of United States sea power.



The Navy's newest carrier-based electronic warfare aircraft, the Grumman EA-6B Prowler, entered service with Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 129 at NAS Whidbey Island, Wash.

Ltj. George Gillett

The Navy and Marine Corps participated in a number of disaster relief activities in 1970. An injured Peruvian earthquake victim is carried across the flight deck of Guam (LPH-9) after being evacuated by an H-46 Sea Knight from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 365. On the other side of the world, a Navy corpsman from Okinawa (LPH-3) immunizes a victim of Typhoon Joan, which ripped through the Philippines killing hundreds and leaving countless others homeless.



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Sgt. D.C. Motley

The Marine Corps' first AV-8A Harrier was accepted on January 6, 1971. The Harrier is shown here during carrier suitability trials aboard Coronado (LPD-11) in April of that year. USMC A701621



A Lockheed P-3 Orion of Patrol Squadron 56 keeps a watchful eye on a disabled Russian Hotel-class nuclear submarine in the North Atlantic in 1972.



Cunningham

On May 10, 1972, Lt. Randy Cunningham and Ltjg. William Driscoll of VF-96 became the Navy's only Vietnam War aces and first "dual" aces, having together as a pilot/flight officer team participated in the downing of five aircraft during action in Southeast Asia.



Driscoll



JOSN George Roska

A Navy SH-3A Sea King helicopter surveys the scene over a flood-ravaged town in Pennsylvania in June 1972. Air units from Guam (LPH-9) provided relief assistance to flood victims.
USN 1152051



NASA



Following a 28-day flight, the three-man, all Navy crew of Skylab II splashes down in the Pacific and is met by pararescue men from Ticonderoga (CVS-14) on June 22, 1973. Left to right above are Cdr. Joseph P. Kerwin, MC, science pilot; Capt. Charles Conrad, Jr., mission commander; and Cdr. Paul J. Weitz, pilot.

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Lt. Cdr. S.G. Riley

A 12-helicopter detachment of RH-53D Sea Stallions of Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron 12 began sweeping the Suez Canal for mines in April 1974 as part of Project Nimbus Star. KN 21641



On February 22, 1974, Ltjg. Barbara Ann Allen became the first woman to be designated a Naval Aviator, at NAS Corpus Christi, Texas. USN 1155635



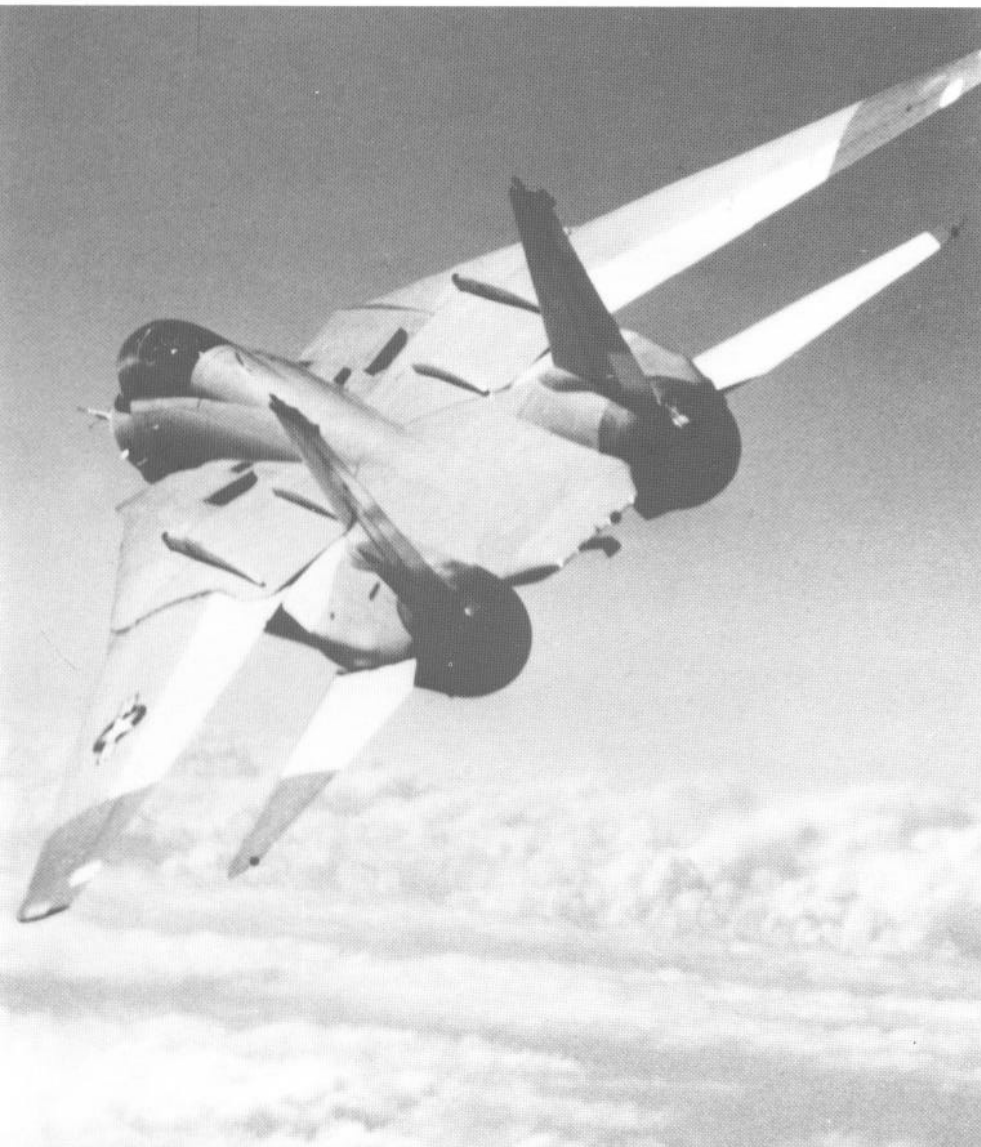


An LSE (landing signal enlisted) directs a Kaman SH-2F Seasprite to a safe landing on the deck of the frigate Lang (FF-1060). Such helicopters are used to extend the range of surface ships in antisubmarine warfare. K 109843

The first operational Lockheed S-3A Vikings were accepted by Carrier Anti-Submarine Squadron 41 on February 20, 1974. This S-3 is shown with magnetic anomaly detection (MAD) boom extended. K 105917



PH1 B.L. Kuykendall



The Grumman F-14 Tomcat fighter joined the fleet in late 1972. Here, it is seen pursuing its quarry, an F-4 Phantom II, in simulated air combat maneuvers. USN 1155922

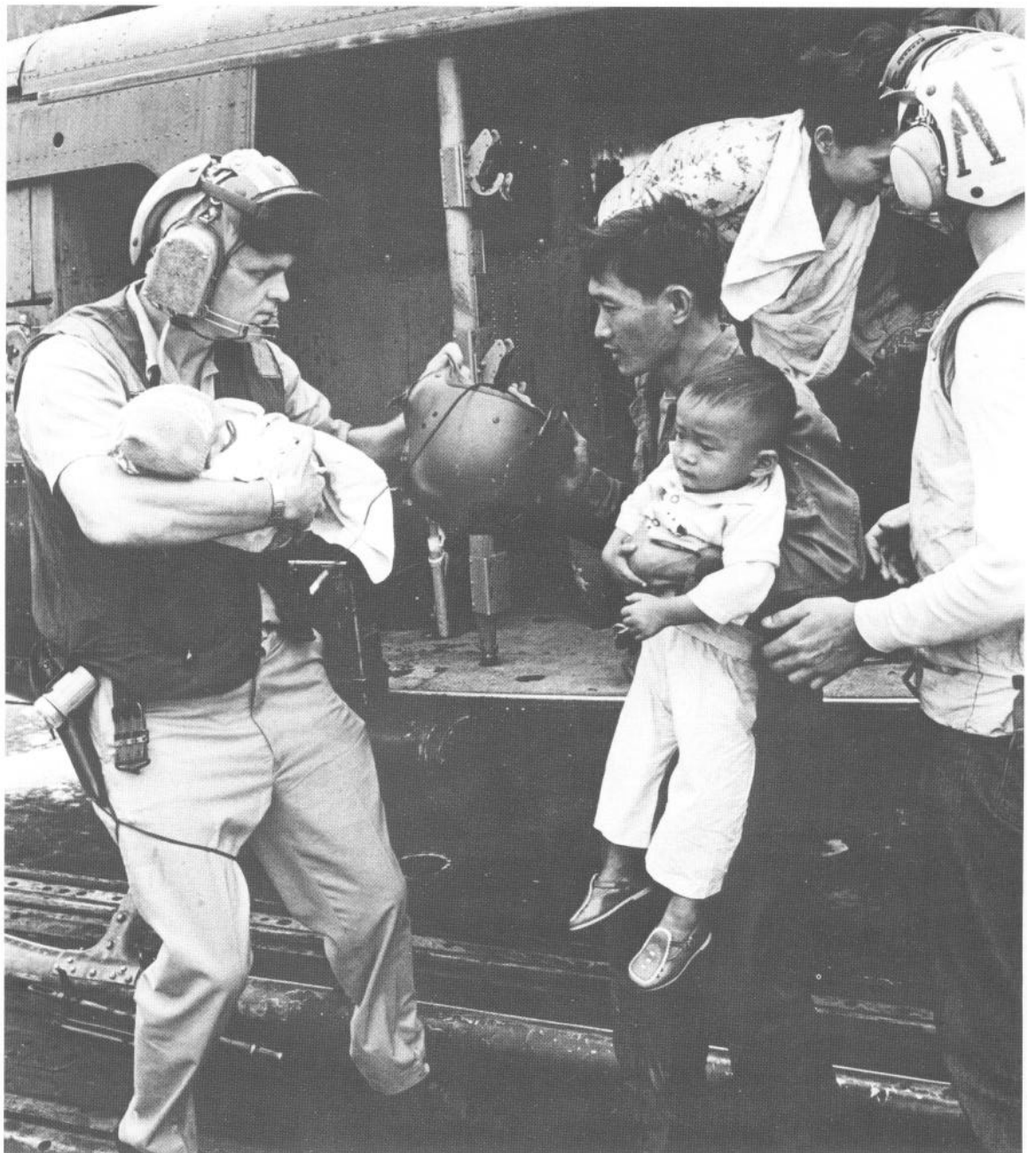
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Navy and Marine Corps helicopters perform evacuation duties as South Vietnam falls to North Vietnamese forces in April 1975.



K 107612

PH3 Harold Brown





Tarawa (LHA-1), the first in a new class of amphibious assault ships, undergoes sea trials prior to her commissioning in May 1976. USN 1163814



PH3 Bob Weissleder

Women take on jobs in Naval Aviation in increasing numbers. Airman Kimberly Warnock preflights an SH-2 Seasprite helicopter at NAS North Island, Calif., in December 1977. USN 1171292



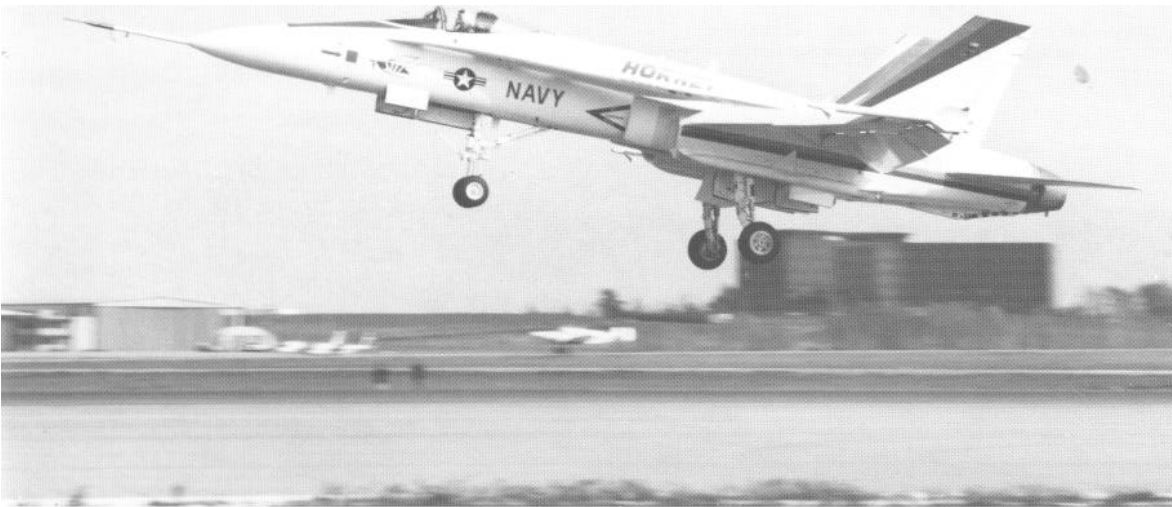
The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Nimitz (CVN-68) cruises with the nuclear-powered guided missile cruiser California (CGN-36) on station in the Mediterranean as part of Task Force 60, in September 1976. USN 1168241

JO2 R. Leonard

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Christmas 1979 found Midway (CV-41), above, and Kitty Hawk (CV-63), right, on station in the Arabian Sea in response to the hostage crisis in Iran. USN 1176315



McDonnell Douglas Corporation

The Navy's new strike fighter, the McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet, makes its first flight on November 18, 1978.

PH1 Art Legare



KN 30373