
VI. Post WW II and Korean Operations (1946-1953)

After WW II, demobilization was rapid. Aircraft carriers went into mothballs and aircraft were retired to desert storage at NAF Litchfield Park, Ariz. The number of personnel on duty dropped to one-fourth of the wartime peak by mid-1946.

Ironically, even in this period of greatly reduced forces, technological changes and scientific advances were accelerating, with constant readjustment of plans, organizational changes and revisions in tactical doctrine. The Department of Defense was established in 1947 and reorganized in 1949. The Naval Air Reserve program, soon to prove its worth, was revitalized and strengthened.

Naval Aviation went forward into new fields. Jet operations began from carrier decks; long-range, carrier-based planes were designed; and helicopters replaced the float planes which had served so long and well aboard battleships and cruisers. Airborne early warning equipment and the techniques for its use extended the range of radar. Flights at unprecedented heights and speeds prompted the design of new flight clothing and an automatic means of bailing out of damaged aircraft. Advances in ordnance, navigational gear and electronic sighting devices changed tactical doctrine. Guided missiles and nuclear weapons also influenced the course of Naval Air development.

In an environment of decreasing budgets, with various services competing for a share of the available funds, disputes inevitably arose. Aircraft carriers were called too expensive, vulnerable and obsolete, but these arguments ended in June 1950 when North Korean troops poured across the 38th parallel in an attempt to overrun their southern neighbor.

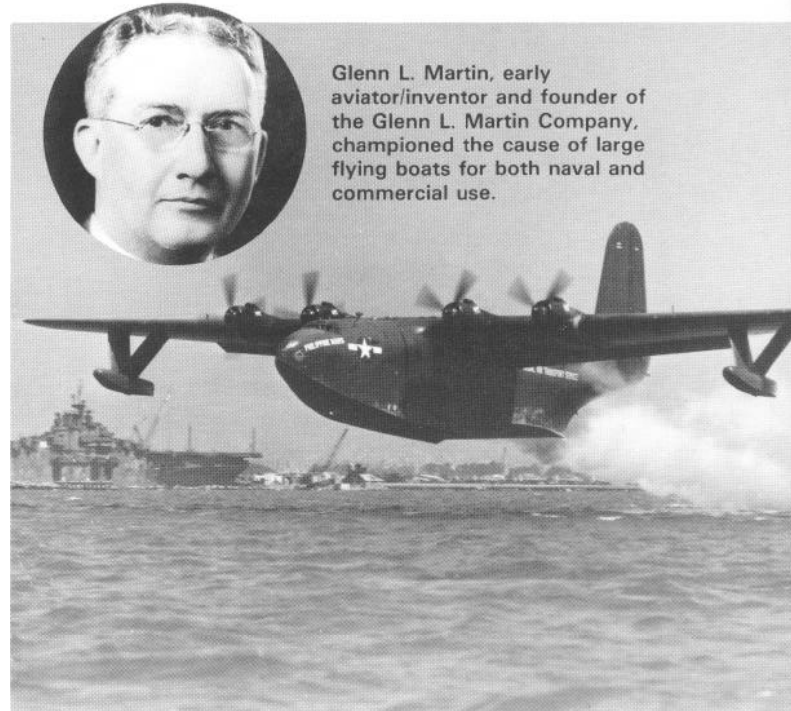
When the President ordered support of South Korean forces, the Navy responded immediately by moving ships and aircraft to Korean waters. Jet planes went into combat for the first time from U.S. carrier decks. Helicopters played an important part in Korea, particularly in the search and rescue role of retrieving downed aviators and wounded from combat areas. Reserve squadrons were recalled to active duty, proving the value of maintaining the proficiency of veteran aviation personnel. Navy and Marine Corps aircraft, though they often tangled with North Korean MiGs, concentrated on close air support and interdiction. Railroads, bridges, supply depots and troop concentrations became the targets of the Navy/Marine Corps team, as once again the need for rapidly deployable carrier-based air power was dramatically demonstrated.

While Naval Aviation was involved mainly in combat operations in the Western Pacific, other squadrons patrolled the Mediterranean to ensure the preservation of peace in that section of the globe. Sixth Fleet ships and aircraft, as well as

others outside the combat area, continued training operations. Research and development, although accelerated during this period, did not shift appreciably to the war effort but continued toward long-range goals advancing Naval Aviation. Research in missiles and high-speed flight provided new data which led to improvements in aircraft and weapons design. Modernization of the aircraft carrier to handle jet aircraft continued and new features were introduced, including the steam catapult and angled flight deck.

In comparison with the WW II experience, the total Naval Air force employed in Korea was small, but its achievement in some respects surpassed those of the earlier conflict. Carriers were used in combat for longer periods and ordnance expenditure exceeded the earlier per-flight delivery. From the opening of hostilities until the truce in 1953, Navy and Marine Corps aircraft flew more than one-third of all the combat sorties flown by U.S. aircraft in Korea.

The Korean war proved once again the need for a nation's navy to control the sea. Yet it was in the Korean interior that Naval Aviation demonstrated its potency and flexibility. Striking vigorously at the enemy's inland communications, Naval Aviators, flying from U.S. carriers, exercised aerial command where it hurt the most — in the enemy's backyard.

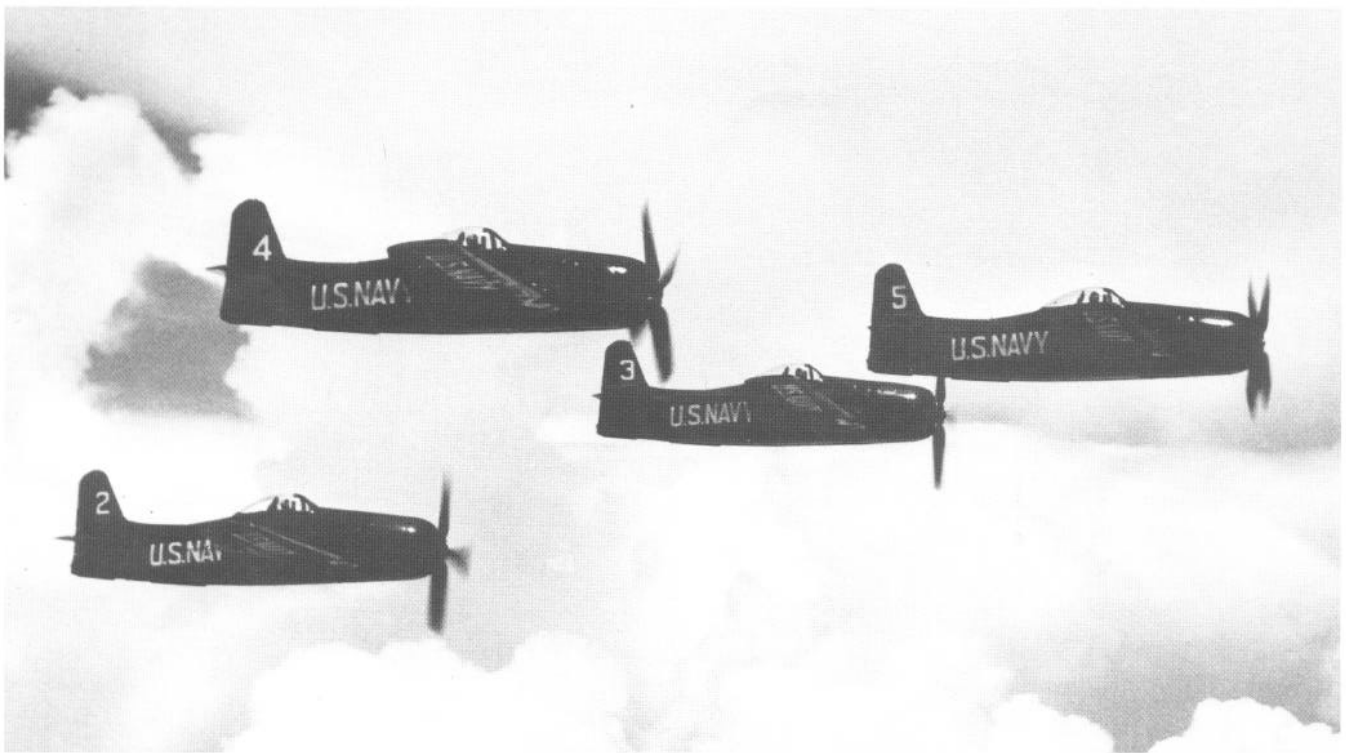


Glenn L. Martin, early aviator/inventor and founder of the Glenn L. Martin Company, championed the cause of large flying boats for both naval and commercial use.

The giant Martin JRM-1 Marshall Mars flying boat began service with Navy Transport Squadron 2 in February 1946. Mars aircraft were the largest operational flying boats ever built. USN 1053758

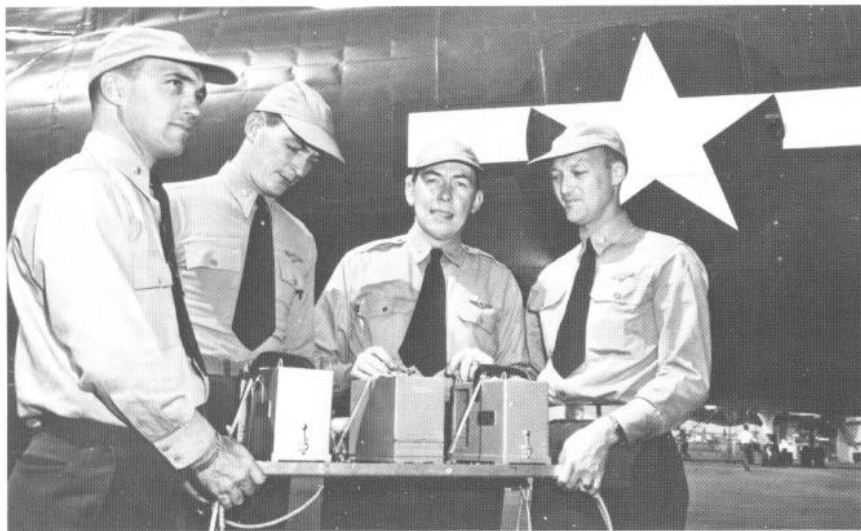
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The birth of the Blues. 1946 marked the beginning of the Navy's famous flight demonstration team, the Blue Angels. Flying F6F Hellcats and led by Lt.Cdr. Roy M. "Butch" Voris, the team put on their first show in Jacksonville, Fla., that year. A short time later, the Blues switched to the more maneuverable F8F Bearcats.





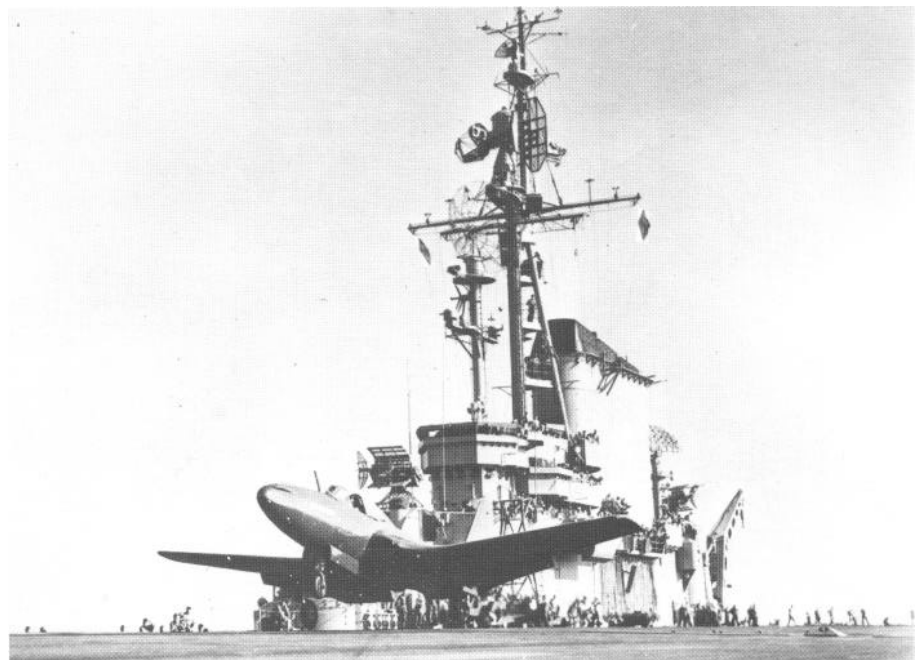
Lockheed-California Company



A Lockheed P-2V Neptune named the Truculent Turtle set a new world distance record in September-October 1946 when it flew from Perth, Australia, to Columbus, Ohio (11,236 miles), without stopping or refueling. Pilots who participated in the historic flight were, left to right: Cdrs. Eugene Rankin, Walter Reid and Thomas Davies and Lt.Cdr. Roy Tabeling. Davies was the aircraft commander.

McDonnell Aircraft Corporation

The jets are coming. A McDonnell FD-1 Phantom flown by Lt.Cdr. James Davidson made the first U.S. tests of jet adaptability to the aircraft carrier in a series of successful takeoffs and landings aboard Franklin D. Roosevelt (CV-42) on July 21, 1946.



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In August 1947, Cdr. Turner F. Caldwell piloted the Douglas D-558-1 Skystreak to a world's speed record of over 640 miles per hour. His record was broken five days later in the same aircraft by another Naval Aviator, Maj. Marion E. Carl, USMC, with a speed of over 650 miles per hour.



Marine Aviators continued to hone their close air support skills in training maneuvers. Here, F4U Corsairs provide cover for Marine reservists at MCAS El Toro, Calif.

Operation High Jump (1946-47) was the largest Antarctic expedition ever mounted. Douglas R4D (C-47) aircraft, equipped with both wheels and skis and mounting JATO bottles, took off from the carrier Philippine Sea and landed ashore.





Lt.Cdr. W.T. Amen, flying an F9F Panther in Korea, became the first Navy pilot to shoot down a jet aircraft. USN 421821

The Grumman F9F Panthers were the first jet fighters used by the Navy in combat. Here, a Panther attacks a North Korean-held bridge.



The Douglas AD Skyraider, ordered during the closing stages of WW II, was a potent weapon during the Korean War. USN 113374



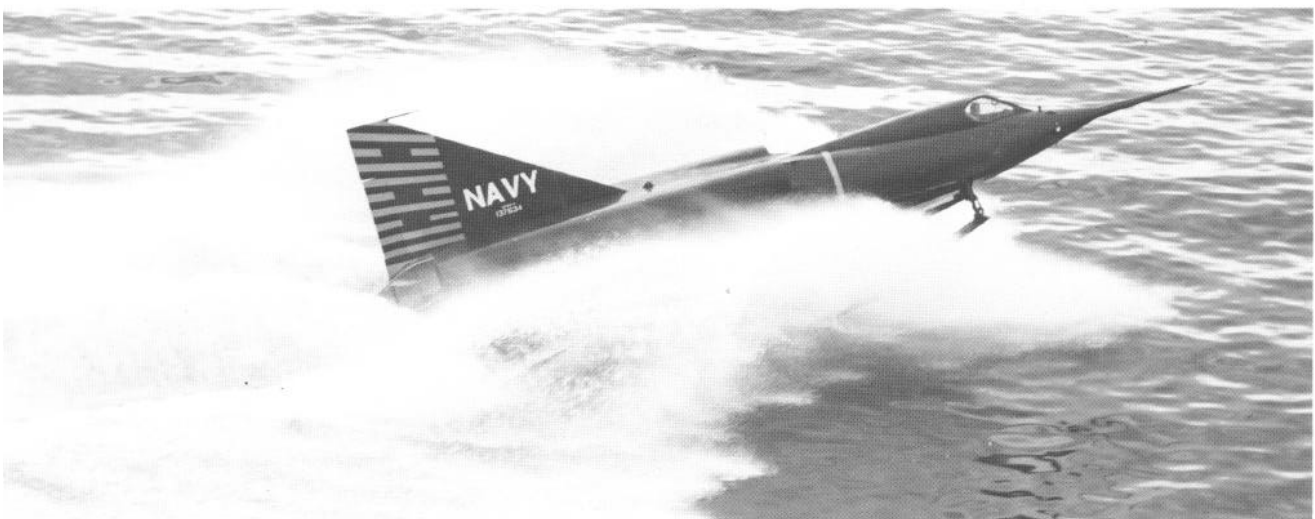
Another new jet fighter, the twin engine McDonnell F2H Banshee, joined the fray in Korea. USN 433960

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In war, Naval Aviators are often called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice. One of these was Ens. Jesse L. Brown, the Navy's first black aviator. He died of injuries suffered in a crash in North Korea when his plane was downed by anti-aircraft fire.

Test operations began aboard Antietam, the Navy's first angled deck aircraft carrier, in January 1953. USN 477063



In April 1953, the Navy's first jet seaplane fighter, the Convair XFSY-1 Sea Dart, made its first flight at San Diego. This aircraft never became operational.



Maj. John F. Bolt, USMC, flying with the Fifth Air Force in Korea, downed his fifth and sixth MiGs to become the first Naval Aviator to attain five victories in jet aerial combat. USMC A348324



Adm. Arthur W. Radford was the first naval officer to be appointed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, serving from June 1953 until he retired in August 1957. USN 438923

Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company



The first production model of the N-class airship made its first flight at Akron, Ohio, in March 1953.