

VIII. The Sixties (1960-1969)

During the sixties, Naval Aviation celebrated its golden anniversary, said goodbye to some faithful old friends and welcomed new ones into its forces. The venerable flying boat passed into history, along with the Navy's lighter-than-air program which came to an end with the disestablishment of the last two airship patrol squadrons in 1961 and the last flight of a Navy airship on August 31, 1962.

Advances in science and their military applications continued to produce new weapons and high-performance aircraft. Air-to-air and air-to-surface missiles had become standard aerial weapons. New families of faster, heavier and more sophisticated jet aircraft made their appearance, including a vertical short takeoff and landing (V/STOL) aircraft, the AV-8A. Many improvements were made in antisubmarine warfare equipment and tactics. The first amphibious assault ship, *Iwo Jima*, was commissioned and others were built to capitalize on the unique capabilities of helicopters in vertical assault and replenishment. Atomic power went to sea aboard nuclear-powered *Enterprise*, commissioned November 25, 1961.

The Navy's role in space rapidly expanded during the 1960s. In May 1961, Commander Alan B. Shepard became the first American to go into space as his space capsule *Freedom 7* reached an altitude of 116 miles high and 302 miles downrange from Cape Canaveral in Florida. Manned orbital flight became a reality when Lieutenant Colonel John H. Glenn, Jr., USMC, and his spacecraft *Friendship 7* took three turns around the earth in February 1962.

Years later, other Naval Aviators made history with *Apollo 8*'s first flight to the moon in 1968, and the first lunar landing in 1969 when Neal A. Armstrong took the first walk on the moon.

Navy ships and squadrons made the recoveries of all the astronauts from the *Mercury*, *Gemini* and *Apollo* space shots and carried out the same recovery missions for the later *Skylab* series. Satellites developed by Navy scientists expanded our knowledge of space, and the Navy space surveillance and satellite navigation systems gave to all nations an accurate means of traveling the earth's oceans.

Along with this exciting look into the future through space exploration, Naval Aviation of the sixties dealt with some rather unsettling earthly matters. This decade brought new international crises which involved U.S. naval forces. Aerial reconnaissance revealed the introduction of Soviet ballistic missiles into Cuba and, in the ensuing blockade, naval aircraft again played an important role. Other conflicts arose in Africa, the Middle East, Berlin and the Caribbean nations. In Southeast Asia, in response to an attempt by North Vietnam to overthrow the government of a free nation, the United States went to the assistance of South Vietnam. Marine Aviation went ashore to resist the enemy attacks and was able to use effectively its portable expeditionary airfield systems under combat conditions.

U.S. involvement in the Vietnamese conflict became America's longest participation in any war, lasting nearly 10 years.

Artist Ted Wilbur for NASA



Cdr. Alan B. Shepard became the first American to be rocketed into space on May 5, 1961. His space capsule, *Freedom 7*, was launched from Cape Canaveral and recovered at sea by a Marine corps HUS-1 helicopter. NH 69954



ZP-1 and ZP-3, the last operating units of the lighter-than-air branch of Naval Aviation, were disestablished at NAS Lakehurst, N.J., on October 31, 1961. The last flight of a Navy airship took place at Lakehurst on August 31, 1962.

Iwo Jima (LPH-2) was commissioned at Bremerton, Wash., on August 26, 1961. She was capable of handling one helicopter squadron and was the first ship designed and built for amphibious assault. NH 69957



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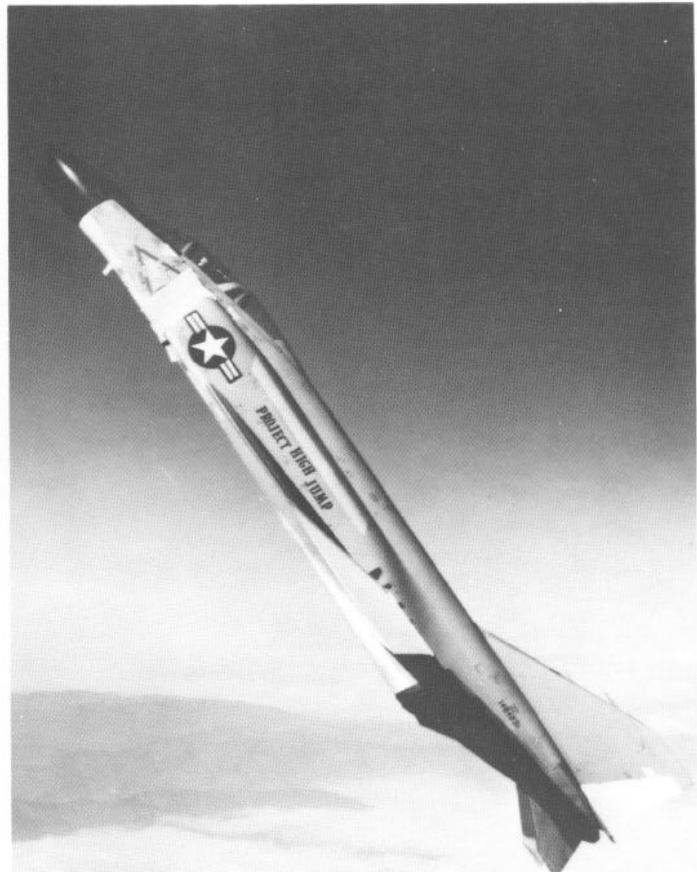
Lt.Col. John Glenn, USMC, became the first American to orbit the earth on February 20, 1962. Glenn is shown here entering the Friendship 7 spacecraft prior to launch.



The Navy's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, Enterprise (CVAN-65), was commissioned at Newport News, Va., on November 25, 1961. The first air operations aboard the new ship were carried out in mid-January of 1962.

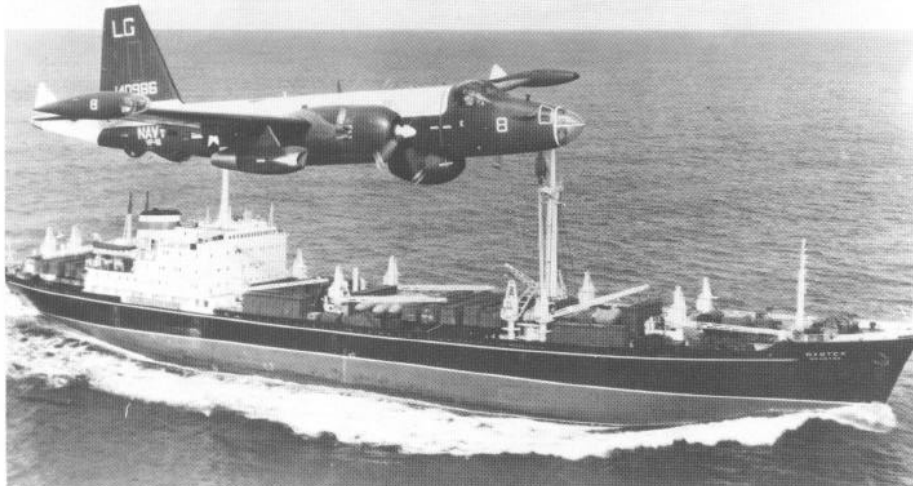
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U.S. Navy aircraft continued to pound enemy positions in Vietnam. Here, an A4 Skyhawk releases a bomb on a Viet Cong stronghold in South Vietnam.
USN 1113917

A McDonnell Douglas F4H-1 Phantom made a clean sweep of world time-to-climb records at NAS Brunswick, Maine, and NAS Point Mugu, Calif., during February, March and April of 1962.



On October 22, 1962, President John F. Kennedy imposed a naval quarantine on Cuba. Here, the Soviet cargo ship Okhotsk is overflown by a Lockheed P2V-7 Neptune of Patrol Squadron 18.

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The XC-142A, an experimental tri-service V/STOL transport aircraft, makes its first carrier landings aboard Bennington off San Diego, Calif., on May 18, 1966. Navy, Marine and Army pilots took turns at the controls.



On June 17, 1965, while escorting a strike into North Vietnam, two F-4B Phantoms engaged four MiG-17s and shot down two, scoring the first U.S. MiG kills in Vietnam. Shown here, from left to right, are pilots Lt. Jack E.D. Batson, Jr., and Cdr. Louis C. Page, Jr., and flight officers Lt.Cdr. Robert B. Doremus and Lt. John C. Smith, Jr.

October 1965 finds the annual Operation Deep Freeze in full swing. Here, a Lockheed LC-130F Hercules turns up at the South Pole. USN 827486



PH1 Gerald R. Kessens



PH1 Robert E. Woods

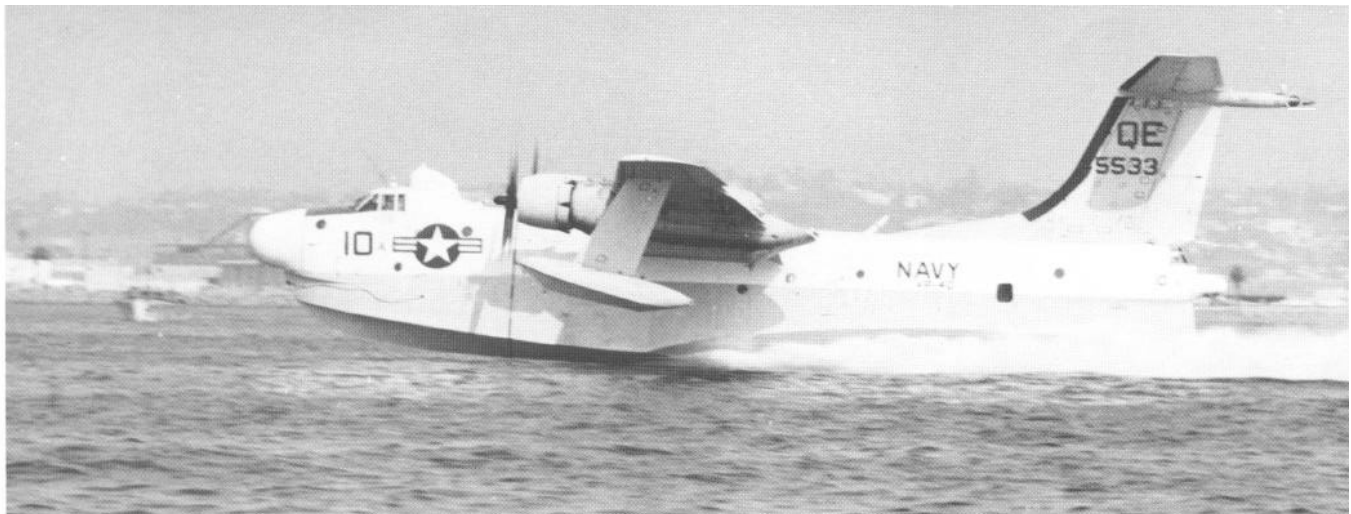
Equipped with a wide array of electronics and sensory search devices, the S-2E Tracker was used to detect, track and destroy enemy submarines. During more than 20 years of service, S-2 aircraft flew over six million hours and made almost three-quarter million carrier landings, with an overall accident rate of only .69 per 10,000 hours.

Lt. T.S. Storck

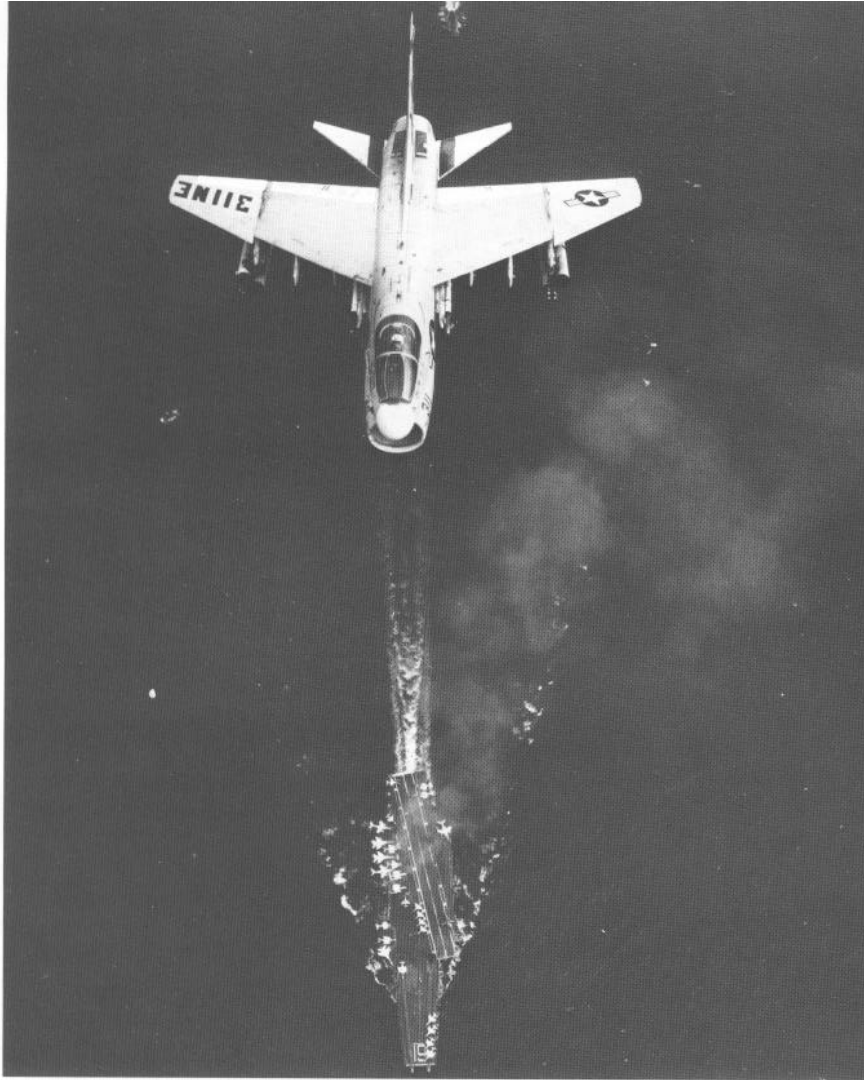


Bell UH-1 Hueys of the Navy's Helicopter Attack Squadron Light 3 provided close air support for U.S. and Vietnamese Navy Riverine operations. USN 1131628

The last operational seaplane flight was made by a Martin SP-5B Marlin flying boat of Patrol Squadron 40 at NAS North Island, Calif., on November 6, 1967.



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PH3 Larry Kenney

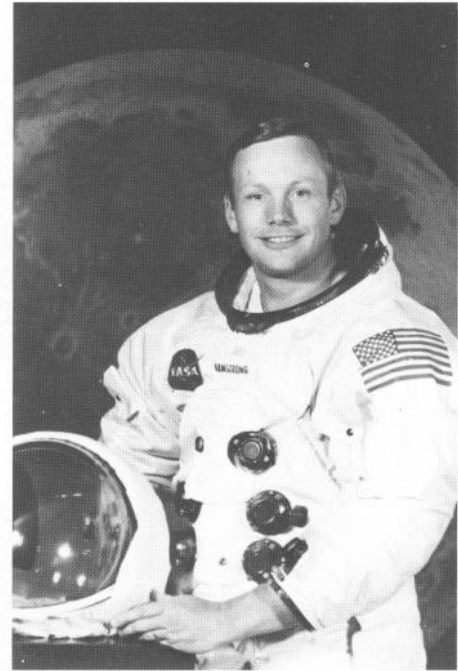
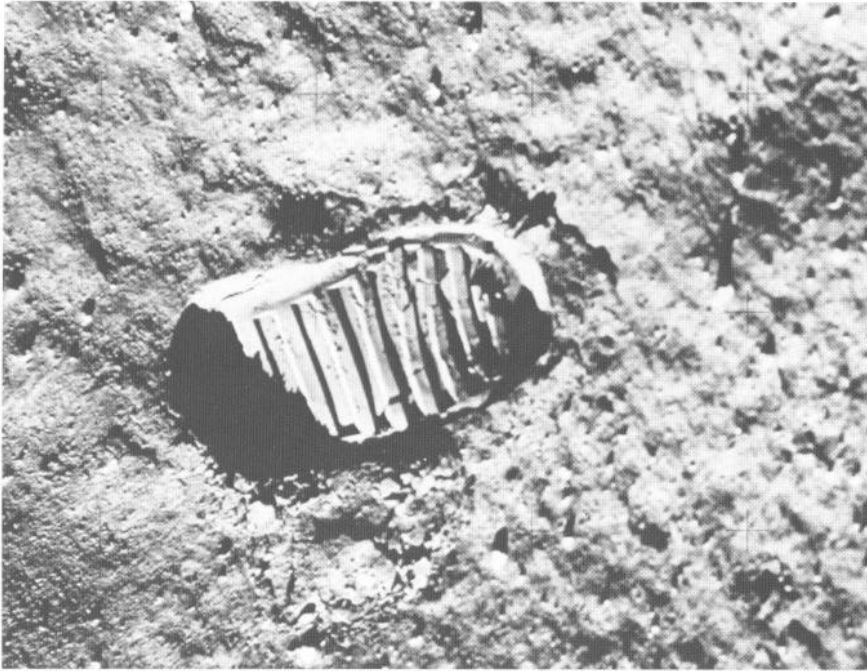
On February 1, 1966, Ltjg. Dieter Dengler took off from Ranger in his A-1H Skyraider on an interdiction mission against a line of communication targets in North Vietnam. In the attack, heavy ground fire crippled the aircraft and Dengler crash-landed in Laos. He was taken prisoner and held for months until he escaped on June 29. Suffering from jaundice and malnutrition, he made his way through the jungle for 21 days. On the morning of the 22nd day, he laid out an SOS on a bed of rocks. An Air Force A-1 spotted him and sent a helo to his rescue. Dengler is shown here a year later preparing for a flight in an A-4 Skyhawk.

J. T. Purcell

U.S. naval forces continued to apply pressure on the North Vietnamese from the Gulf of Tonkin. Here, a Vought A-7A Corsair II of Attack Squadron 147 flies over the carrier Ranger (CVA-61) in December 1968.

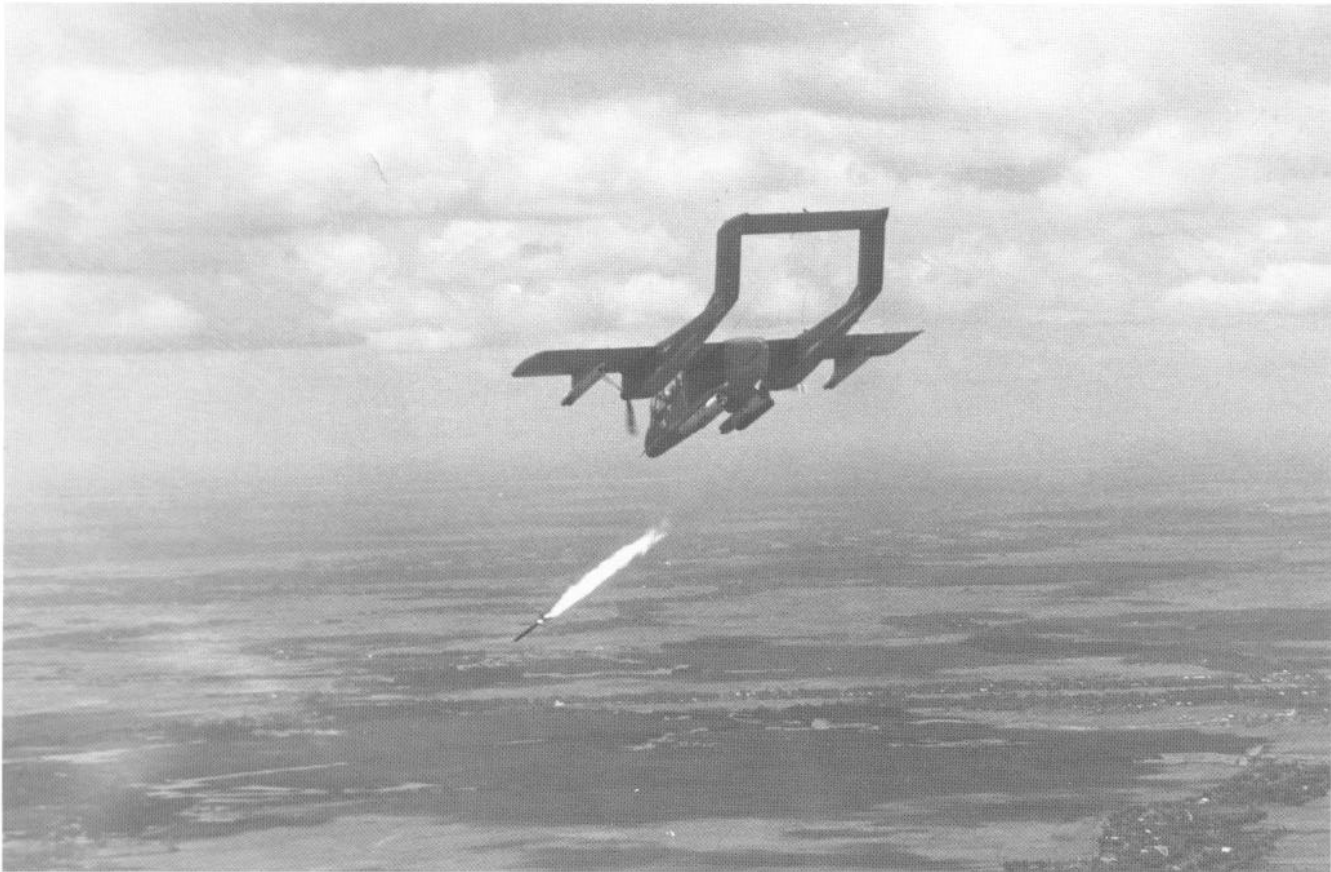
F-4 Phantoms from Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 are refueled by KC-130 tankers on a transpacific flight to Vietnam. USMC A26244





Footprint on the moon. On July 20, 1969, former Naval Aviator Neil Armstrong, mission commander of Apollo 11, became the first man to walk on the moon.

PHC A. R. Hill



Light Attack Squadron 4, the first Navy squadron of its type, was commissioned on January 3, 1969, and deployed to Vietnam in March. Operating North American Rockwell OV-10A Bronco aircraft from airfields in the Mekong Delta, the squadron provided fixed-wing air support for Riverine operations. USN 1139900