

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

CAPTAIN JOE D. ADKINS, UNITED STATES NAVY

Joe Dean Adkins was born in Marlow, Oklahoma, on June 5, 1925, son of Jesse Henry and Mabel (Williams) Adkins. He enlisted in the U. S. Naval Reserve on October 29, 1942, and as a Midshipman attended the University of Oklahoma at Norman. He entered the V-5 Program as an Aviation Cadet, U. S. Naval Reserve in February 1944. Following flight training at various Naval Air Stations, he was commissioned Ensign, U. S. Naval Reserve on February 1, 1946, and Naval Aviator on March 26, that year. He subsequently advanced in rank to that of Captain, to date from October 1, 1968, having transferred from the Naval Reserve to the U. S. Navy on July 15, 1955.

Following his commission in 1946, he joined Fighting Squadron FIVE-A as Administrative Officer and in January 1948 transferred to FIFTY-FOUR-L. Released from active service in September 1948, he was a banker, employed as Manager of a loan and discount department.

Returning to active duty in September 1949, he joined Voluntary Aviation Unit ELEVEN-1. From August to November 1951 he had instruction at the Naval Air Material Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, after which he served in the USS BATAAN (CVL-29). In June 1953 he transferred to Utility Squadron SEVEN and served as Training Officer and Material Officer until November 1954, when he reported for duty as Fighter Squadron Training Officer-Instructor and Training Officer at the Naval Air Station, Oakland, California.

During the period December 1957 to September 1958 he was a student at the General Line School, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, then became Intelligence Officer and Flag Secretary and Aide on the Staff of Commander Carrier Division SIXTEEN. In August 1960 he returned, as a student, to the University of Oklahoma, from which he received a Bachelor of Science degree in April 1962. He next joined the Staff of Carrier Air Wing EIGHT, based on the USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) and served as Operations Officer, Special Weapons and Ordnance Officer, and Assistant Nuclear Weapons Coordinator on board the FORRESTAL. From March 1964 to February 1966 he was attached to Attack Squadron SEVENTY-TWO and served first as Executive Officer and in February 1965 assumed command. As the pilot of an A4E aircraft embarked in USS INDEPENDENCE (CVA-62), he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Gold Stars in lieu of the Second and Third similar awards and the Navy Commendation Medal with Gold Star in lieu of a Second award and Combat "V". The citations follow in part:

Distinguished Flying Cross: "For extraordinary achievement...on July 14, 1965...Acting as strike leader in an air-wing coordinated strike against the Tri-Dong Bridge, North Vietnam, one of the major supply routes from north-central into southern North Vietnam, Commander Adkins, in the

face of enemy gunfire from the surrounding area, led and directed eleven A4E and one A6A aircraft in the bombing attack which resulted in the complete destruction of a 75-foot span the bridge and caused two other spans to drop. He personally scored direct hits with eight, 500-pound bombs, contributing directly to the overall success of the strike..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Second Distinguished Flying Cross: "For extraordinary achievement...on September 20, 1965. Participating in a 32-plane, air wing strike on the Cao Nung Railway Bridge, Bac Le, North Vietnam, Commander Adkins led his element as it successfully evaded the missile and antiaircraft threat. By his quick actions the BULLPUP striking element was intact and able to respond to the on-the-spot directions of the strike coordinator. During the retirement phase which involved a downed A4E pilot, he assumed the communications lead from the strike leader and coordinated the roll back and the necessary SAR communications. His superb airmanship and vigilant leadership were critical to the overall success of the mission..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Third Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroic achievement...on October 31, 1965...Leading a division of aircraft and acting as the strike leader for a 23-plane, air-wing coordinated strike on the Kep Highway Bridge in North Vietnam, he, despite surface-to-air missiles and intense antiaircraft fire, was able to keep the force intact and to coordinate a devastating attack on the bridge. Four surface-to-air missile sites were located within a few miles of the bridge and the entire complex was guarded with an impressive array of conventional antiaircraft artillery. He directed the complete destruction of this bridge with unerring accuracy in the face of intense antiaircraft fire. All four spans and two stanchions of the bridge were dropped, leaving it totally demolished. Because of his superb planning and skillful coordination of the attack, not a single plane was lost or damaged..."

Navy Commendation Medal: "For heroic achievement...on September 13, 1965...leading a Rescue Combat Air Patrol flight into enemy territory in an attempt to locate a downed A4E pilot, despite severe weather conditions and intense enemy ground fire which knocked out his aircraft's hydraulic system, (he) made repeated passes through the designated search area. Displaying superb airmanship, leadership and great courage in the face of enemy fire, Commander Adkins carried out his assigned search and rescue mission under extremely adverse flight conditions..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Second Navy Commendation Medal: "For meritorious achievement...during missions in support of combat operations in Southeast Asia against the insurgent communist guerrilla forces from November 2 to 10, 1965. In the successful completion of such missions, he contributed materially to the success of United States efforts in Southeast Asia..."

He was also awarded the Air Medal with one Silver Star and two Gold Stars (in lieu of seven additional medals) for meritorious achievement in aerial flight in Southeast Asia from July 1 to October 31, 1965 and is entitled to the Ribbon for, and a facsimile of the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the USS INDEPENDENCE.

In February 1966 he joined the USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) as Operations Officer and remained there until October 1967 when he assumed command of Attasck Squadron FORTY-FOUR. In February 1969 he reported as Project Coordinator of the A-4/TA-4 Project at the Naval Air Systems Command Headquarters, Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

In addition to the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Gold Stars, the Air Medal with one Silver Star and two Gold Stars, the Navy Commendation Medal with Gold Star and Combat "V", and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, Captain Adkins has the Naval Reserve Medal; American Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal with bronze star; Korean Service Medal with four stars; Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; United Nations Service Medal; and the Vietnam Service Medal. He also has the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation Badge and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device.

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