



25 November 1961: USS Enterprise (CVN 65), the world's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, commissioned.

21 July 1969: Astronaut Neil Armstrong, a former naval aviator, becomes the first human to set foot on the surface of the Moon.



12-30 April 1975: Navy and Marine Corps aircraft and ships evacuate thousands as the Cambodian and South Vietnamese regimes collapse.



12 April 1981: Naval aviators, Capt. John Young and Robert Crippen, are at the controls of the Columbia on its two-day maiden voyage.

5 May 1961: Cmdr. Alan B. Shepard Jr. becomes the first American in space aboard Freedom 7.



1 May 1966: Naval Air Systems Command established.

26 August 1961: USS Iwo Jima (LPH 2), the first "helicopter carrier" amphibious ship built from the keel up, commissioned.



20 February 1962: Marine Lt. Col. John H. Glenn Jr. becomes the first American to orbit the earth.



29 January 1963: The television-guided glide bomb AGM-62 Walleye, one of the first "smart bombs," is tested successfully at China Lake, Calif.

5 August 1964: In retaliation for the Tonkin Gulf incidents, the first naval air strikes against Vietnam take place, with aircraft from USS Constellation (CVA 64) and USS Ticonderoga (CVA 14) bombing targets along the North Vietnam coast.

26 March 1965: Aircraft from U.S. 7th Fleet begin participating in Operation Rolling Thunder, the systematic bombing of military targets in North Vietnam.

September 1966: First successful intercept test of the AIM-54 Phoenix missile.

29 July 1967: A fire aboard USS Forrestal (CVA 59) kills 132 and wounds 161.

25 May 1973: Skylab II, carrying an all-Navy crew, begins repairs to the Skylab station, damaged during initial launch and deployment.

5 April 1972: Navy tactical aircraft hit targets in southern North Vietnam, helping to beat back the so-called Easter Offensive.



14 July 1969: First A-7E Corsair II, the first naval aircraft with a heads-up display, is delivered to an operational squadron, VA-122.



22 February 1974: Lt. j.g. Barbara Ann Allen becomes the first woman to be designated as a naval aviator.

Jan-Dec 1979: Navy aviation forces responded to five global crises, in Cuba, Nicaragua, Korea, Iran, and Yemen.

12 May 1975: Coral Sea participates in the recovery of the American merchant vessel SS Mayaguez off the coast of Cambodia.

25 October 1983: USS Guam (LPH 9), USS Independence (CV 62), and numerous other Navy vessels support the landing of Marines and Soldiers on Grenada.



3 June 1980: The AGM-65E, the laser-guided Marine Corps version of the Maverick missile, is fired for the first time.

10 October 1985: Navy aircraft intercept Egyptian airliner carrying four Achille Lauro terrorists.

1961 AIRCRAFT IN SERVICE: 10,101 1966 VIETNAM WAR 1971 1976 1981 1986

1961: SH-3 Sea King enters service.

1964: UH-1 Iroquois enters service.



1966: CH-53 Sea Stallion enters service.

24 June 1969: First operational "hands off" arrested landing system, AN/SPN-42, is used aboard USS Saratoga (CVA 60).

1971: AV-8 Harrier enters service.



1974: F-14 Tomcat enters service.

1974: S-3 Viking enters service.



1983: F/A-18 Hornet enters service.



1984: SH-60 enters service.

FIGHTING HOT AND COLD WARS: 1961-1986

Naval Aviation would face its greatest combat and logistics challenges to date over the skies of Southeast Asia, where it was tasked with conducting years of sustained operations. Operating from carriers on "Yankee" and "Dixie" Station or land bases in South Vietnam such as Da Nang, Navy and Marine Corps aircraft attacked targets in the North and provided air mobility and support to Marines on the ground in the South. In the final years of the war, air power would prove instrumental in bringing the combatants to the negotiating table and help end major U.S. involvement by 1973. Concurrently, Naval Aviation also provided strategic conventional deterrence against the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War. During the Soviet Navy build up beginning in the 1960s, Naval Aviation provided long-range and carrier-based antisubmarine capabilities against new quieter submarines, fleet air defense against long-range bombers, and an offensive capability built around nuclear-powered carriers that found its ultimate articulation in the Maritime Strategy of the 1980s.

5 June 1976: First test of fully guided Tomahawk cruise missile.



22 June 1977: A Navy OV-10D Bronco tests the Forward Looking Infrared System.

