

# FINDING AID

DET 206: EP-3 Collision Incident Deployment

Collection Number | AR/695

6 April 2001 – 16 October 2001



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*Finding Aid is available at |* [WWW.HISTORY.NAVY.MIL](http://WWW.HISTORY.NAVY.MIL)

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### PREFERRED CITATION

Collection Name, Collection Number, Box Number, Folder Number  
United States Naval History and Heritage Command  
805 Kidder Breese, Washington, DC 20374

**Collection Title** | DET 206: EP-3 Collision Incident, 2001

**Collection Number** | AR/695

**Accession Number** | 2002-168 through 2002-190; 2002-221

**Collection Creator** | Navy Combat Documentation Detachment 206

**Collection Donor** | Navy Combat Documentation Detachment 206

**Record Formats** | Mixed Media Collection; Paper; Photo Prints; Compact Disks; Digital Materials, including PDF and WAV files

**Content Dates** | 6 April 2001 – 16 October 2001

**Extent** | 2 Boxes [1 Narrow Legal Hollinger Box, 1 FRC Box]

1.38 Cubic Feet

1.21 Linear Feet

**Language** | English

**Conditions of Access** (*Classification Level*)

UNCLASSIFIED

**Restrictions**

This collection may contain materials with sensitive or confidential information that is protected under federal right to privacy laws and regulations.

**Physical Access**

No restrictions to physical access.

**Copyright**

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**Provenance/Acquisition**

Navy Combat Documentation Detachment 206 reservists deposited this collection at the NHHC Archives following its creation.

## **Administrative Note + History**

Navy Combat Documentation Detachment 206 (DET 206) was established in 1991 as a reserve unit attached to the Naval Historical Center (NHC). DET 206 was established to support historical documentation of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Since its establishment, reservists assigned to the unit have deployed to commands around the world to document naval activity, missions, conflicts, and significant events. The reservists typically gather oral histories and historical materials. In 2018, DET 206 leadership renamed the unit the Navy Combat Documentation Unit (NCDU).

On 1 April 2001, a U.S. Navy EP-3 signals intelligence aircraft collided in mid-air with a Chinese Navy J-8II interceptor fighter jet. The collision occurred over the South China Sea approximately 70 miles from the Chinese island province of Hainan. Aboard the EP-3 were 24 crewmembers from two separate commands - Naval Security Group Attachment (NSGA) Misawa and Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron ONE (VQ-1). The EP-3 crew was five hours into a signals intelligence mission, which involved overflights of the South China Sea, when they were intercepted by two Chinese Navy J-8 fighter jets. While making a series of aggressive close passes of the EP-3, one of the J-8 fighter jets collided with the aircraft. The collision resulted in the death of the Chinese Navy pilot, Wang Wei. The EP-3 suffered significant damage. Initially, the crew of the EP-3 lost control of the aircraft. After several minutes, the flight crew was able to stabilize the aircraft through emergency controls. After considering the options, one of the pilots made the decision to make an unauthorized emergency landing at Lingshui airfield on the Chinese island of Hainan.

After landing on Hainan, all 24 members of the crew of the EP-3 were detained by the Chinese government. The Chinese government also took possession of the EP-3. Many of the crewmembers were interrogated regularly during their detainment, although none revealed any information. While they had possession of the EP-3, the Chinese stripped it of the classified intelligence and equipment that was onboard. Although the crewmembers began emergency destruction efforts to destroy all of the classified intelligence and equipment that had been onboard the aircraft as soon as LT Osborn made the call to land on Hainan, the Chinese were still able to gather a large amount of material from the aircraft.

Diplomatic efforts to negotiate the release of the crew and the aircraft took 11 days. While the release of the crew was unconditional, the Chinese government would only return the aircraft if it was disassembled first. On 12 April 2001, the EP-3 crew departed China on a plane bound for Guam. Their eventual destination was Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island, the home base of VQ-1. After debriefings occurred in Hawaii, the crew returned to NAS Whidbey Island. On April 14, 2001, NAS Whidbey Island hosted a large homecoming ceremony at which the crew's return was celebrated. The repatriation and homecoming of the crew became known as Operation VALIANT RETURN. The EP-3 aircraft was dismantled on Hainan by technicians from Lockheed Martin and returned in pieces via cargo plane to an air base in Georgia. After the aircraft's parts arrived in Georgia in July 2001, the aircraft was reassembled and repaired. The aircraft was then returned to service.

## **Related Materials/Collections**

Unknown

## Scope + Content

This collection contains oral histories, historical materials, and photographs related to the 2001 EP-3 collision and the aftermath. The oral history files contain interview audio and abstracts, as well as photos of the interviewees. Historical materials include public affairs materials from Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island. The photographs document the crew during their return flights home, as well as the NAS Whidbey Island homecoming celebrations. The oral histories, historical materials, and photographs were collected by DET 206 reservists. The collection also contains deployment documentation created by the DET 206 reservists before and after their deployment. The deployment documentation includes a well-written narrative of the collision and the aftermath, as well as a summary of the primary themes and issues that were addressed during the interviews.

On May 20, 2001, DET 206 reservists were able to conduct a group interview with 5 of the EP-3 crewmembers at the Naval Historical Center (NHC). 2 of the 5 crewmembers who participated in the interview were assigned to NSGA Misawa. The other 3 were assigned to VQ-1. The same day, DET 206 reservists also conducted a joint interview with aircraft commander LT Shane Osborn and Flight Engineer ADCS(AW) Nick Mellos.

In July 2001, a team of DET 206 reservists deployed to NAS Whidbey Island. While at NAS Whidbey Island, the DET 206 reservists conducted 22 additional oral history interviews. The reservists interviewed 9 other members of VQ-1 that were part of the EP-3 crew. The reservists also interviewed VQ-1 personnel who were stationed at NAS Whidbey Island at the time of the collision, NAS Whidbey Island military and civilian personnel, and the spouses of 2 of the EP-3 pilots.

The primary issues and themes the reservists attempted to address in the oral history interviews include the decision to land in China, the importance of Survival, Evasion, Resistance, & Escape (SERE) training, and emergency destruction procedures and protocol onboard the EP-3.

## Arrangement

This collection has been arranged into four series:

1. Deployment Documentation
2. Historical Materials
3. Oral Histories
4. Photographs

The series are arranged alphabetically. The materials within each series are also arranged alphabetically.

## Series Descriptions

Series 1: Deployment Documentation

This series contains administrative materials created by the reservists during and after the deployment.

Series 2: Historical Materials

This series contains the historical materials gathered by the reservists during the deployment.

### Series 3: Oral Histories

This series contains the oral histories that were gathered by the DET 206 reservists. Each oral history has an abstract and an audio file available digitally.

### Series 4: Photographs

This series contains photo prints that were gathered by reservists. The photographs document the EP-3 incident aftermath, the individuals involved, and other relevant subjects. There are indexes for each folder of photographs available digitally.

## Container List

### Series 1: Deployment Documentation

Box #	Folder #	Title
01	01	After Action Report, 20 July 2001
01	02	CD - Transcripts, After Action Report, Narrative Summary, 10 July - 26 October 2001
01	03	Narrative Summary with Enclosures, 26 October 2001

### Series 2: Historical Materials

Box #	Folder #	Title
01	04	NAS Whidbey Island 2000 Base Guide
01	05	NAS Whidbey Island Crosswinds Newspapers, 6 April 2001, 13 April 2001, & 20 April 2001 Editions
01	06	Team Whidbey Operation Valiant Return 12 APR 2001 1530 Briefing

### Series 3: Oral Histories

Box #	Folder #	Title
02	01	Blocher, Steven AE2, 13 July 2001
02	02	Borland, Bradford CTSN, 11 July 2001
02	03	Comerford, John LT, 12 July 2001
02	04	Guidry, Scott AT2, 5 July 2001
02	05	Honeck, Kimmie, 13 July 2001
02	06	Honeck, Patrick LT, 12 July 2001
02	07	Juatai, Joaquin JO2 & Popp, Tony, 3 July 2001
02	08	Kauffman, Regina LTJG, 3 July 2001
02	09	Lessard, Bernard CDR, 11 July 2001
02	10	Lindscott, Tom & Wetzal, Emily, 10 July 2001

**Series 3: Oral Histories (cont'd)**

Box #	Folder #	Title
02	11	Marriott, William CAPT, 9 July 2001
02	12	Martin, Kimberly A., 9 July 2001
02	13	McKee, Patty, 3 July 2001
02	14	Mercado, Ramon AT2, 3 July 2001
02	15	NHC Group Interview (VQ-1 Crew & NSGA), 20 May 2001
02	16	Osborn, Shane LT & Mellos, Nicholas ADCS, 20 May 2001
02	17	Pierzchala, Tabitha LT, 9 July 2001
02	18	Salter, Larry CAPT, 1 July 2001
02	19	Thomason, David W. MACS(SW), 6 July 2001
02	20	Vignery, Jeffrey LTJG, 10 July 2001 & 13 July 2001
02	21	Vignery, Julie, 12 July 2001
02	22	Wallsteadt, Dave CMC, 11 July 2001
02	23	Walter, Chip CDR & Seliga, Ken CDR, 16 July 2001
02	24	Westbrook, Wendy AD2, 17 July 2001

**Series 4: Photographs**

Box #	Folder #	Title
02	25	VQ-1 Squadron Photos
02	26	VQ-1 Crew Release from China, 12 April 2001
02	27	VQ-1 Flight from China to Guam, 12 April 2001
02	28	VQ-1 Crew Departing Guam, 12 April 2001
02	29	VQ-1 Flight from Guam to Hawaii, 12 April 2001
02	30	Senior Leadership
02	31	Oak Harbor & Community Support, April 2001
02	32	Homecoming at NAS Whidbey Island - Base & Community, 14 April 2001
02	33	Homecoming at NAS Whidbey Island - Crew, 14 April 2001
02	34	Homecoming at NAS Whidbey Island - Official Ceremony, 14 April 2001
02	35	Media & Aftermath, April 2001

**Series 4: Photographs (cont'd)**

Box #	Folder #	Title
02	36	Photos taken at NAS Whidbey Island by NCDD 206, July 2001