



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON ONE THREE SEVEN
UNIT 60148
FPO AP 96601-6239

5750
Ser 00/038
25 Feb 09

From: Commanding Officer, Strike Fighter Squadron 137
To: Naval Historical Center (Aviation History)

Subj: COMMAND OPERATIONS REPORT

Ref: (a) SECNAVINST 5750.12J

- Encl:
- (1) VFA-137 2008 Operations Report
 - (2) Battle Efficiency Award Squadron Cover Letter
 - (3) Battle Efficiency Award Data Spreadsheet
 - (4) Battle Efficiency Award CVW-2 Endorsement
 - (5) "LTJG Bruce Carrier Award for Excellence in Maintenance"
 - (6) "CNO Annual Safety Award" submissions Squadron Cover Letter
 - (7) "CNO Annual Safety Award" CVW-2 Endorsement
 - (8) "Secretary of Defense Phoenix Award for Maintenance Excellence" submission
 - (9) "Kestrels Fly over Army-Navy Game," LTJG [REDACTED], Tailhook, Spring 2008
 - (10) "Kestrels Host Gold Star Families," LTJG [REDACTED], Golden Eagle, 11 April 2008
 - (11) "Kestrels Recognize Sailors of the Quarter 2 May 2008," LTJG [REDACTED], Golden Eagle, 25 April 2008
 - (12) "Kestrels Conduct Change of Command," LTJG [REDACTED], Golden Eagle, 9 May 2008
 - (13) "Kestrel's Promotions," LT [REDACTED], Golden Eagle, 6 June 2008
 - (14) "Kestrels Recognize Sailors of the Quarter 4 July 08," LTJG [REDACTED], Golden Eagle, 30 June 2008
 - (15) "Kestrels Support Combat Operations in OIF and OEF," LT [REDACTED], Tailhook, Fall 2008
 - (16) "Kestrels Surpass 90000 Hours," LTJG [REDACTED], Tailhook, Summer 2008
 - (17) "Kestrels Find Fulfillment in Flyover," ENS [REDACTED], Golden Eagle, 5 Decemebr 2008
 - (18) "Kestrels' Day to Remember," ENS [REDACTED], Golden Eagle, 2 December 2008
 - (19) "Kestrels Deploy and Return in Stride," ENS [REDACTED], Tailhook, Winter 2008
 - (20) Biography of Commander: "CDR D.D. Kindley, USN"
 - (21) Commanding Officer's Official Photograph: "CDR D.D. Kindley, USN"
 - (22) Aircraft: "VFA-137, #212 over Afghanistan"
 - (23) Aircraft: "VFA-137, #200 with Squadron during Deployment"
 - (24) Aircraft: "VFA-137, #207 evening onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN"

Subj: COMMAND OPERATIONS REPORT

1. Per reference (a), Strike Fighter Squadron 137 submits its 2008 Command Operations Report.

2. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure file types are Windows based including Microsoft Word, Microsoft Power Point, Microsoft Excel, and JPG.

3. My point of contact is Ensign [REDACTED]. He can be reached at (559) [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED]@navy.mil.



D. D. KINDLEY

VFA-137 Command Operations Report
Calendar Year 2008

1. Command Data

- a. Name: Strike Fighter Squadron One Three Seven
- b. UIC: 55142
- c. Commanding Officer: Kindley, David D., CDR, USN
- d. Assumed Command: 2008-05-01
- e. Mission: To provide combat ready, trained and educated forces to Carrier Air Wing TWO enabling sustained, carrier based, air power projection.
- f. Home Port: Naval Air Station Lemoore, California
- g. Immediate Superior: Operational – Commander, Carrier Air Wing TWO
Administrative – Commander, Strike Fighter Wing Pacific
- h. Task Force: None
- i. Forces under operational control: None
- j. Aircraft: 12 F/A-18E, tail code NE
- k. Tenant Activities: None
- l. Personnel Assigned: 23 officers, 192 enlisted
- m. Point of Contact: [REDACTED]
Public Affairs Officer
[REDACTED]@navy.mil
[REDACTED]@navy.smil.mil
(559) [REDACTED]
DSN: [REDACTED]

Commanding Officer
STRKFITRON 137
Unit #60148
FPO AP 96601-6239
- n. Organizational Structure:
 - Commanding Officer – CDR S.P. Baker, Jan – May
CDR D.D. Kindley, May – Dec
 - Executive Officer – CDR D.D. Kindley, Jan – May
CDR C.T. Wilson, May – Dec
 - Command Master Chief – CMDCM (AW/SW) J.E. Williams
 - Command Career Counselor – NCI [REDACTED], Jan – Dec

Administrative Officer – LCDR ██████████, Jan – Oct
LCDR ██████████, Oct – Dec

Operations Officer – LCDR ██████████, Jan – Apr
LCDR ██████████, Apr – Oct
LCDR ██████████, Oct – Dec

Maintenance Officer – LCDR ██████████, Jan – Apr
LCDR ██████████, Apr – Oct
LCDR ██████████, Oct – Dec

Safety Officer – LCDR ██████████, Jan – Apr
LCDR ██████████, Apr – Oct
LCDR ██████████, Oct – Dec

2. Commander's Assessment

As with most of the Navy, 2008 was characterized by fevered activity for the Kestrels of VFA-137. Almost two years of constant training and honing of logistical and operational skills culminated in a very successful combat deployment for the squadron, beginning 17 March and finishing 8 October.

Commencing on 30 April, the Kestrels began flying Close Air Support (CAS) missions off the deck of USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72) in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and were crucial in pacifying al-Amarah, one of the last notable Shiite insurgent strongholds in the country. The Kestrels, along with the others squadrons of Carrier Air Wing Two (CVW-2), were the last aircraft to fly carrier based operations in support of OIF in 2008. While the violence in Iraq was reduced to five year lows, the situation in Afghanistan was worsening. CVW-2 was called upon to support Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), and the Kestrels were again at the forefront of combat operations.

The success of the 2008 deployment was not merely a result of effective support of ground troops in two areas of operations, but also in unparalleled maintenance achievements. The unwavering dedication and attention to detail from the various maintenance workcenters gave the squadron the most pride during a stupendous 2008.

In the coming year, the squadron will continue to strive for tactical superiority by conducting numerous detachments and applying the lessons learned from our deployment to our day-to-day operations.

3. Chronology and Narrative

2008 01 21 – 01 31: Command embarked in USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) for Joint Task Force Exercise (JTFEX). Squadron flew 307.2 flight hours and 164 sorties with a 96% completion rate.

2008 02 07: Command surpassed 90,000 Class-A mishap-free flight hours.

2008 03 17 – 07 03: Command embarked in USS Abraham Lincoln for the Western Pacific and Central Command deployment. Squadron flew in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and flew 2073.8 flight hours and 691 sorties with a 98% completion rate.

2008 04 16 – 04 20: Port call to Singapore.

2008 04 30: Command flies the SHARP pod over Iraq, eventually becoming the first F/A-18E squadron to fly SHARP in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

2008 05 23 – 05 27: Port call to Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates.

2008 07 03 – 07 07: Port call to Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates.

2008 07 08: Squadron begins flights in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and flew 2090.1 flight hours and 689 sorties with a 98% completion rate. VFA-137 aircraft were the last aircraft to leave Afghanistan, “closing the door” on combat operations for CVW-2.

2008 08 30 – 08 31: Port call to Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates.

2008 09 12 – 09 15: Port call to Laem Chabang, Thailand.

2008 09 30 – 10 03: Port call to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

2008 10 08: Command disembarks USS Abraham Lincoln, completing seven month deployment, supporting operations in the North Arabian Gulf and the North Arabian Sea.

2008 11 17 – 11 21: Command conducts detachment to Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada to provide simulated “RED” air contingent to F-15 Strike Eagles and F-22 Raptors while improving its own air-to-air tactics.

4. Supporting Reports

a. Statistical Data:

i. Hours Flown

Ashore:	1518.4	Embarked:	4960.3
Total:	6732.5		

ii. Sorties

Ashore:	985	Embarked:	2026
Total:	2960		

iii. Carrier Landings:

Day:	972	Night:	1092
Total:	2064		

b. “Battle Efficiency Award” submissions

i. Squadron Cover Letter

ii. Data Spreadsheet

iii. CVW-2 Endorsement

c. “LTJg Bruce Carrier Award for Excellence in Maintenance” submission

d. “CNO Annual Safety Award” submissions

i. Squadron Cover Letter

ii. CVW-2 Endorsement

e. “Secretary of Defense Phoenix Award for Maintenance Excellence” submission

5. Published Documents

a. Professional Articles:

i. “Kestrels Fly over Army-Navy Game,” LTJG [REDACTED], *Tailhook*, Spring 2008

ii. “Kestrels Host Gold Star Families,” LTJG [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, 11 Apr 2008

iii. “Kestrels Recognize Sailors of the Quarter 02 May 08,” LTJG [REDACTED] *Golden Eagle*, 25 Apr 2008

iv. “Kestrels Conduct Change of Command,” LTJG [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, 09 May 2008

v. “Kestrels' Promotions,” LT [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, 06 Jun 2008

vi. “Kestrels Recognize Sailors of the Quarter 04 Jul 08,” LTJG [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, 30 Jun 2008

- vii. "Kestrels Support Combat Operations in OIF and OEF," LT [REDACTED], *Tailhook*, Fall 2008
- viii. "Kestrels Surpass 90000 Hours," LTJG [REDACTED], *Tailhook*, Summer 2008
- ix. "Kestrels Find Fulfillment in Flyover," ENS [REDACTED], *Golden Eagle*, 05 Dec 2008
- x. "Kestrels' Day to Remember," ENS [REDACTED] *Golden Eagle*, 26 Dec 2008
- xi. "Kestrels Deploy and Return in Stride," ENS [REDACTED], *Tailhook*, Winter 2008

b. Command Website: <http://www.lemoore.navy.mil/vfa-137/>

c. Biography of Commander: "CDR D.D. Kindley, USN"

6. Photographs

a. Commanding Officer's Official Photograph: "CDR D.D. Kindley, USN"

b. Aircraft: "VFA-137, #212 over Afghanistan"

c. Aircraft: "VFA-137, #200 with Squadron During Deployment"

d. Aircraft: "VFA-137, #207 evening onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN"

1650
Ser 00/

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on STRKFITRON 137 ltr 1650 Ser 00/301
of 1 Dec 08

From: Commander, Carrier Air Wing TWO
To: Commander, Strike Fighter Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Subj: 2008 CNO AVIATION SAFETY AWARD NOMINATION FOR STRIKE
FIGHTER SQUADRON 137

1. Forwarded, with my strongest possible recommendation for selection.
2. The Kestrels of Strike Fighter Squadron 137 epitomize the professionalism and safety awareness required from an operational unit to receive the 2008 CNO Annual Safety Award. Their safety record of over 95,600 mishap-free flight hours speaks for itself. This achievement becomes even more impressive when considering the Kestrels flew more hours within the dynamic FIFTH FLEET operational area than any other squadron in Naval Aviation during calendar year 2008. This could only occur as a result of the squadron's continued pursuit of excellence in all safety matters. The Kestrels always integrate Operational Risk Management into their operations, both at work and during off-duty activities. They actively pursue insights into their command climate and seek better ways of performing their duties in a safe and professional manner. Their zealous and creative programs to combat alcohol related incidents serve as an example to all commands. As we have come to expect from one of the finest units in Naval Aviation, the Kestrels have continued an impeccable and impressive mishap-free safety record. They exemplify a relentless pursuit of flying, maintaining and conducting themselves in the safest manner possible.
3. The Kestrels' dedication and demonstrated devotion to safety make them my choice for the 2008 CNO Annual Safety Award.

A. E. ROSS

Copy to:
VFA-137

1650
Ser 00/

From: Commanding Officer, Strike Fighter Squadron 137
To: Commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Via: (1) Commander, Carrier Air Wing TWO
(2) Commander, Strike Fighter Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Subj: 2008 CNO AVIATION SAFETY AWARD NOMINATION FOR STRIKE
FIGHTER SQUADRON 137

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 1650.28A
(b) OPNAVINST 3750.6R
(c) COMNAVAIRFORINST 1650.15E

Encl: (1) CY-08 Quarterly Safety Report (1st Quarter)
(2) CY-08 Quarterly Safety Report (2nd Quarter)
(3) CY-08 Quarterly Safety Report (3rd Quarter)
(4) CY-08 Quarterly Safety Report (4th Quarter)

1. Per references (a) through (c), the following is submitted in support of VFA-137's nomination for the 2008 Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Annual Safety Award for 1 January through 31 December 2008.

2. Summary of Action. Since their inception, the Kestrels of VFA-137 have operated under the "Safety through Professionalism" model of mission accomplishment. The squadron's easily definable goal of mission readiness begins and ends with a Safety Program focused on protecting our Sailors and assets. The squadron set forth in 2008 with the substantial goal of continuing the command's excellent safety record under the most extreme circumstances - preparing for, executing and returning home from a seven-month combat deployment to the FIFTH Fleet area of operations. VFA-137 accomplished this goal in all measures of success.

a. The Kestrels again completed the year Class A mishap-free, bringing their total to 23.5 years and over 95,600 F/A-18 flight hours since the squadron's commissioning. The squadron flew over 3,100 Class A/B/C flight, flight-related and ground mishap-free sorties during the course of 2008, with an Air Wing TWO leading 1,979 of those embarked at sea (6,537.1 total hours flown, 5,320.9 embarked hours). During the 2008 FIFTH Fleet

Subj: 2008 CNO AVIATION SAFETY AWARD NOMINATION FOR STRIKE
FIGHTER SQUADRON 137

deployment, VFA-137 flew 472 combat sorties and attained 1,828 arrested landings, with 76 percent being night landings. In addition, VFA-137 flew 1,223.4 incident-free tanker hours onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72). During this period, the Kestrels were recognized as the recipient of the CNAF Quarterly Safety "S" Award for the second quarter calendar year 2008 and reached the 90,000 flight hour mishap free milestone.

b. The Kestrel Safety Department played a vital role in ensuring the command was focused throughout the high tempo workup cycle and combat operations in support of Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM. Operationally, the Kestrels began the 2008 combat deployment with over half the squadron having no combat experience. Recognizing the potential dangers, the Safety Department drove a vigorous Operational Risk Management (ORM) program. Multi-faceted in its approach, the program included "Combat ORM" safety stand downs that ensured junior aviators understood the risks associated with employing the F/A-18 in combat. Multiple stand downs and portions of all-hands discussions focused on the many hazards that exist when conducting carrier flight operations in a dynamic and non-standard environment. By the year's end, the Kestrels had flown eight months at sea, five of those months being dedicated to combat operations, while still maintaining a complete mishap-free record.

c. A robust and active Safety Program led to the submission of six hazard reports and 72 Naval Aviation Maintenance Discrepancy Reporting Program reports. The reports provided timely fleet-wide dissemination of critical issues surrounding safe operation of Super Hornets, to include educating Commander, FIFTH Fleet on maintenance and operational impacts of external fuel tank transfer failures. The next F/A-18E/F/G Systems Safety Working Group Conference will also address safety concerns voiced in the Kestrel's hazard reports concerning external fuel tank transfer failures and Environmental Control System (ECS) malfunctions.

d. The Safety Department continued a successful maintainer specific Human Factors Council to highlight high risk enlisted personnel. This and other "outside-the-box" thinking epitomizes the Kestrel Safety Department's dedication to the welfare of all personnel. In efforts to eradicate driving under the influence and other alcohol related incidents, VFA-137 continued to

Subj: 2008 CNO AVIATION SAFETY AWARD NOMINATION FOR STRIKE
FIGHTER SQUADRON 137

successfully implement several programs, to include a safe driver program and working with a local cab company to reduce fares and/or charge the command when a sailor finds him/herself without taxi fare. These efforts focus on the safety and well-being of the off-duty Kestrel Sailor and have proven integral in preventing alcohol related incidents. Additionally, the "Kestrel Spirit Program" provided the opportunity for anyone in the chain to nominate an individual to the Commanding Officer who acted above the norm in a safety matter. The Commanding Officer made informal command coin presentations to the deserving individual in front of his or her work center or the squadron and allowed the Skipper to reemphasize his concerns for safety and its place in mission readiness. Finally, the entire squadron participated in two on-line Command Safety Assessments and Maintenance Climate Assessment Surveys during calendar year 2008. Designed to provide command leadership with uninhibited insight into the way the squadron performs on a daily basis, the surveys were invaluable in making the squadron safer and even more operationally sound.

e. Whether at work or at home, peacetime or combat, the Kestrels continue the culture and tradition of operating safely and professionally. Our Safety Program continues to be a model for the fleet with programs like our "Kestrel Egg" anymouse system, informative and entertaining safety stand downs, Maintenance Human Factors Councils and robust monthly Enlisted Safety Committee Meetings. The Kestrels have ingrained ORM into the daily working environment and use it as a tool for identifying hazards and implementing controls into every aspect of squadron operations. The Kestrels have also integrated ORM into the off-duty life of each and every Sailor ensuring the safety and well-being of our squadron members at home as well as at work. The Safety Department continues to amplify safety awareness with innovative use of the internet, safety newsletters, and above all, visibility to all hands. The "Safety through Professionalism" culture that has flourished in the squadron throughout our history has continued to grow for the most critical aspect of any aviation safety program - the personnel who work on and fly the aircraft.

3. During both peacetime and combat, the Kestrels always ensure safety is a critical part of mission accomplishment. An active Safety Department and a culture of safety within the squadron continues to enable the Kestrels to achieve significant safety

Subj: 2008 CNO AVIATION SAFETY AWARD NOMINATION FOR STRIKE
FIGHTER SQUADRON 137

and operational milestones. During a mishap-free year that included more than eight months at sea, five months in combat, and a successful transition back to the homefront, no squadron is more deserving of the CNO Aviation Safety Award.

D. D. KINDLEY

1650
Ser 00/279
10 Dec 07

From: Commanding Officer, Strike Fighter Squadron 137
To: Commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Via: Commander, Carrier Air Wing TWO
Commander, Strike Fighter Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Subj: BATTLE EFFICIENCY AWARD

Ref: (a) CSFWPINST 1650.3C/CSFWLINST 1650.3J

Encl: (1) Battle E Data Spreadsheet

1. Per reference (a), the following information and enclosure (1) are submitted for FY 2008:

a. Cost-Wise Performance and Efficiency

- (1) Operational Efficiency: 1.79
- (2) Aircraft Material Readiness: 100%
- (3) Schedule Performance Index: 1.00
- (4) Cost Performance Index: 1.26

b. Performance Readiness

(1) Operational Achievements.

- (a) Squadron landing grades (index): 1.01
- (b) Squadron boarding rates (day index): 1.03
- (c) Squadron boarding rates (night index): 1.00
- (d) Operational/combat missions: 1848
- (e) Operational/combat mission completion rate: 97.4%
- (f) Total embarked hours: 5865.3

Subj: BATTLE EFFICIENCY AWARD

(g) Total night carrier landings: 1327

(h) Actual combat expenditure: 47

(2) Training and Readiness.

(a) Non-FRPT exercise/detachment participation: 0

(b) Weapons training efficiency: 94

(c) Simulator utilization: 77.2%

(d) SFWT progress: 82.4%

(3) Inspections.

(a) NATOPS Unit Evaluation: 100

(b) CWTPI: 100

(4) Material Readiness.

(a) Aviation Maintenance Inspection (AMI): 77.6%

(b) Material Condition Inspection (MCI): 0%

(c) Cannibalization rate per 100 flight hours: 7.1

(d) NEC Fit: 82.51%

(e) Qualified Proficient Technician (QPT)Fit: 74.1%

(5) Personnel Readiness.

(a) Retention rate of Zones A, B and C: 75%

(b) Advancement rate (E-4, E-5 and E-6): 23%

(c) PNA rate (E-4, E-5 and E-6): 76%

(d) Physical Readiness Standard: 98.6%

(e) Medical Readiness Score: 83.3%

(f) Health Promotion Score: 100

Subj: BATTLE EFFICIENCY AWARD

(6) Safety.

- (a) Class Alpha mishaps: 0
- (b) Class Bravo mishaps: 0
- (c) FOD occurrences: 0
- (d) Hazard Reports submitted: 6
- (e) NATOPS changes submitted: 0
- (f) NATOPS changes accepted: 0
- (g) Safety articles submitted: 1

1. "An Abrupt "Bend" to the Army / Navy Game",
LT J. D. Duffie, Submitted *Approach* Magazine, February 08

- (h) Safety articles accepted: 1

1. "Questions and Cannons", LT K.J. Nastro,
Published *Approach* Magazine, March-April Edition 2008

- (i) NAMDRP reports submitted: 74

(7) Weapons and Tactics Development.

- (a) Tactical documents submitted: 2

1. "An Abrupt "Bends" to the Army / Navy Game",
LT J. D. Duffie, Submitted *Approach* Magazine, February 08

- (b) Tactical documents accepted: 1

1. "An Abrupt "Bends" to the Army / Navy Game",
LT J. D. Duffie, Submitted *Approach* Magazine, February 08

- (c) Tactical projects completed: 0
- (d) TACMAN changes submitted: 0
- (e) TACMAN changes accepted: 0

Subj: BATTLE EFFICIENCY AWARD

(d) Professional articles submitted: 22

1. "Kestrels recognize sailors during combat operations", LTJG Lenhart, *Golden Eagle*, September 1, 2008

2. "Kestrels welcome new CPO", LTJG Lenhart, *Golden Eagle*, September 15, 2008

(e) Professional articles published: 20

1. "Kestrels revolutionize maritime strike tactics", LTJG Kirwan, *Tailhook*, Fall 2007

2. "Kestrels recognize Sailors of the Quarter", LTJG Kirwan, *Golden Eagle*, October 19, 2007

3. "Kestrels conduct Wounded Warrior flyover", LTJG Kirwan, *Golden Eagle*, November 9, 2007

4. "Kestrels conduct Wounded Warrior flyover", LTJG Kirwan, *Tailhook*, Winter 2007

5. "Kestrels flyover Army Navy game", LTJG Kirwan, *Golden Eagle*, December 7, 2007

6. "Kestrels flyover Army Navy game", LTJG Kirwan, *Tailhook*, Spring 2008

7. "Kestrels recognize Sailors of the Quarter", LTJG Kirwan, *Golden Eagle*, December 14, 2007

8. "Kestrels recognize Sailor of the Year", LTJG Kirwan, *Golden Eagle*, January 18, 2008

9. "Kestrels host Gold Star Families", LTJG Kirwan, *Golden Eagle*, February 15, 2008

10. "Kestrel salute Hunter's 24 year career", LTJG Kirwan, *Golden Eagle*, February 29, 2008

11. "Kestrels surpass 90,000 mishap free hours", LTJG Kirwan, *Golden Eagle*, March 14, 2008

Subj: BATTLE EFFICIENCY AWARD

12. "Kestrels surpass 90,000 mishap free hours",
LTJG Kirwan, *Tailhook*, Summer 2008

13. "Kestrels salute Rake's 21 year career",
LTJG Kirwan, *Golden Eagle*, March 21, 2008

14. "Kestrels salute Czoschke's 21 year career",
LTJG Kirwan, *Golden Eagle*, April 4, 2008

15. "Kestrels recognize Sailors of the Quarter",
LT Gibson, *Golden Eagle*, May 2, 2008

16. "Kestrels celebrate 20 year anniversary", LT
Gibson, *Golden Eagle*, May 9, 2008

17. "Kestrel change of command at sea", LT
Gibson, *Golden Eagle*, May 9, 2008

18. "Kestrels frock exceptional Sailors", LT
Gibson, *Golden Eagle*, June 13, 2008

19. "Kestrels recognize Sailors of the Quarter",
LT Gibson, *Golden Eagle*, July 15, 2008

20. "Kestrels support combat operations in OEF
and OIF", LT Gibson, *Tailhook*, Fall 2008

(8) General Contributions to the Strike-Fighter
Community

(a) CSFWP Bomb Derby Participant

2. CO's Comments:

a. During FY-08, the Kestrels of VFA-137 participated in a broad spectrum of training operations throughout the FRTP cycle and finishing the year conducting combat operations on deployment as a component of Commander, Carrier Air Wing TWO. For the first time in many years, the Kestrels were privileged to conduct combat operations in the Fifth Fleet Area of Responsibility to participate in two wars in the support ground forces of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The squadron's performance throughout the FRTP cycle proved invaluable to the successes that were nothing short of

Subj: BATTLE EFFICIENCY AWARD

exceptional throughout deployment. The following are highlights of the maintenance and operational successes of VFA-137 in Fiscal Year 2008.

b. As Carrier Strike Group NINE worked to maintain the highest level of readiness in support of the Global War On Terrorism, VFA-137 embarked onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN-72) for both COMPTUEX and JTFEX training exercises. The squadron led the Air Wing in all metrics including a stellar 98.2% sortie completion rate, 98% aircraft availability rate, and the generation of 953.4 mishap-free flight hours. VFA-137 led the Air Wing tactically, consistently producing the highest BHA rates of all the strike-fighter squadrons throughout the two exercises. Not resting on our laurels, the Kestrels continued their dominance by leading most of the Battle Group's challenging MI/DCA and Long Range Strike missions. Ashore, VFA-137 continued to spearhead the development of innovative and new required tactics such as Non-Traditional Interdiction Support and Reconnaissance (NTISR) in support of troop movements, Night Strafing in support of Close Air Support missions and the introduction as the first ever single seat qualified Rescue Mission Commander for NSAWC. As the FRPT cycle came to an end in preparation for a seven month deployment, the Kestrels were recognized for an exceptional Safety milestone by surpassing 90,000 mishap free flight hours, dating back to the inception of the squadron 23 years.

c. Departing from NAS Lemoore in March 2008, the Kestrels were well prepared and anxious to support our brothers in arms battling The War on Terrorism in the 5th Fleet Area of Responsibility. Without prior pilot training or maintenance training, the Kestrels were tasked to conduct Shared Reconnaissance Pod (SHARP) missions to provide ground commanders with time sensitive reconnaissance in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. The Kestrels took the challenge on board and were able to conduct this highly visible and valuable mission with glowing success. With 98% sortie and mission success rates, we were also able to collect invaluable imagery at a 99% success rate. Taking the lead in combat preparation, the Kestrels were called upon to prepare Carrier Air Wing 2 for Combat Operations with detailed briefings, tactics and training enroute to the AOR in preparation of conducting combat operations in two countries. The Kestrel's team mindset not only prepared themselves for combat operations, but the entire air-wing for multitude of missions confronted in

Subj: BATTLE EFFICIENCY AWARD

both war fronts. On one mission in particular, it was the Kestrels that were on scene to interrupt an insurgent attack utilizing night strafing tactics which ultimately thwarted the offensive in the Al Amarah region of Southern Iraq.

d. The Kestrel Maintenance Department, following an arduous maintenance inspection cycle that was lauded by CSFWP and CNAF inspectors, continued to perform at the highest levels of efficiency and productivity throughout the year and deployment. The culmination of a year of hard work and preparation was tested throughout harsh conditions of the Arabian Gulf and high tempo combat operations. The Kestrels proved that their successes throughout the inspection cycle would be carried on throughout daily operations by performing at the highest levels and producing aircraft for combat operations with unmatched capability and reliability for any mission required. The Kestrels were awarded the bragging rights among the air-wing in all metrics throughout the seven month deployment. Leading the way in sorties flown (1848), sortie completion rate (97.4%) and flight hours (4911.6), the Kestrels proved that "by the book" maintenance practices, dedication to mission accomplishment and safety awareness lead to success.

e. As the fiscal year and seven month deployment ended, the Kestrels are able to look back on a year flush with success and the comfort of knowing that our actions proved vital in turning the tide in the war on terrorism in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The Kestrels would fly a praise-worthy 98% of all scheduled sorties, amassing 4,419 total mishap-free flight hours, 5865.3 of those hours originating from the deck of the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN-72), a feat unattainable without the Kestrel's unwavering professionalism and dedication to our mission. Our readiness is a derivative of vigilant safety practices and steadfast devotion to the highest of standards. The Kestrels have earned the trust and respect of the entire Hornet community. The Battle E is fitting recognition for our professionals who have led CVW-2 and CSFWP in every endeavor.

D. D. KINDLEY

CY 2008 Battle E Performance Data Input

Squadrons: Fill in the **BLUE** blocks only. Do not enter data in any other blocks!
 Data entered by CSFWP/CSFWL in **GREEN** blocks.

CSFWPINST 1650.3C/
 CSFWLINST 1650.3J
 Encl. 3,
 Para. #

Squadron: **VFA-137**

COST-WISE READINESS METRICS

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
3.a Monthly C-rating score	2	2	2	2	1.83	1.83	1.83	1.67	1.67	1.83	1	1.83
Operational Efficiency:	1.79											

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
3.b Actual # RFT Aircraft												
Entitlement												
Monthly score												
Aircraft Material Readiness:	100.00%											

	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
3.c Quarterly Reported SPI	1	1	1	1
Schedule Performance Index:	1			

3.d Annual Reported Cost Performance Index (CPI)	1.26
--	------

PERFORMANCE READINESS METRICS

	1st Line Prd	2nd Line Prd	3rd Line Prd	4th Line Prd
4.a.1 Squadron Landing Grade	3.394	3.487	3.47	
Air Wing Landing Grade	3.463	3.427	3.452	3.606
Line Period Index	0.98007508	1.01750802	1.00521437	N/A
(Count)	3			
Final Landing Grade (Index)	1.00			

	1st Line Prd	2nd Line Prd	3rd Line Prd	4th Line Prd
4.a.2 Squadron Day Boarding Rate	97.5	96.7	94.6	
Air Wing Day Boarding Rate	96	95.7	95.4	97.5
Line Period Index	1.015625	1.01044932	0.99161426	N/A
(Count)	3			
Final Day Boarding Rate (Index)	1.01			

	1st Line Prd	2nd Line Prd	3rd Line Prd	4th Line Prd
Squadron Night Boarding Rate	90.7	94	91.6	
Air Wing Night Boarding Rate	90.2	93.7	92.3	93.5
Line Period Index	1.00554324	1.00320171	0.99241603	N/A
(Count)	3			
Final Night Boarding Rate (Index)	1.00			

4.a.3

	2nd Fleet	3rd Fleet	5th Fleet	6th Fleet	7th Fleet
Deployed Operational Missions		119	1398		331
Total Deployed Operational Missions	1848				

4.a.4

	2nd Fleet	3rd Fleet	5th Fleet	6th Fleet	7th Fleet
Operational Mission Completion Rate (%)		97.5%	97.8%		97.0%
(Count)	3				
Average Mission Completion Rate	97.4%				

4.a.5

Total embarked hours	5865.3
----------------------	--------

4.a.6

Total night carrier landings	1327
------------------------------	------

4.a.7

	Bombs	Bullets	A-G Missiles	A-A Missiles
Actual Combat Expenditure				
Number expended	24	1149	0	0
(Points per weapon)	1	0.02	2	5
Total Points	47			

4.a.8

	Exer/Det #1	Exer/Det #2	Exer/Det #3	Exer/Det #4	Exer/Det #5	Exer/Det #6	Exer/Det #7
Non-FRP Exercises & Detachments							
Mission completion rate (%)							
(Count)	0						
Total participation/success	0.0%						

4.b.1

	IR MSL	RDR MSL	LGB	SLAM ER	JDAM	JSOW	HARM	MAV
Aircrew assigned	17							
Number of weapons expended	0	0	14	0	31	0	0	0
Ordnance expenditure requirement for M2	2	2	11.9	1	1	1	1	1
Below required expenditure	-2	-2	2.1	-1	30	-1	-1	-1
Type-point penalties (one point max per type)	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Weapons training efficiency (100 max, 92 min)	94							

4.b.2

Simulator Hours Executed	124.6
Simulator Hours Scheduled	161.3
Simulator Utilization (%)	77.2%

4.b.3

Aircrew advancing at least one SFWT level	14
Aircrew assigned (from 4.b.2 above)	17
SFWT Progress (%)	82.4%

4.b.4

NATOPS Unit Evaluation (100 or 0)	100.0
-----------------------------------	-------

4.c.1

CWTPI Score (100 or 0)	100.0
------------------------	-------

4.c.2

	On Track	NMA	Off Track
Maintenance program status (number of each)	30.5	5.75	6.75
Points per program	2	1	0
AMI score	77.6%		

4.d.1

	Total Inspected	Pass	Fail
Maintenance program status (number of each)	2	0	2
Points per program		2	0
MCI score	0.0%		

4.d.2

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Cannibalization Rate (per 100 ft hrs)	9.1	6.1	21.2	2.9	5.3	5.2	4.1	5.7	5	3.1	5.8	11.6
Average Cannibalization Rate	7.1											

4.d.3

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
NEC Fit												
NEC Entitlement												
Monthly score												
NEC Fit Score	82.51%											

4.d.4

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
QPT Fit												
QPT Entitlement												
Monthly score												
QPT Fit Score	74.10%											

4.d.5

	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C
Retention			
Number of personnel at EAOS	35	6	7
Number of personnel that Reenlisted	24	5	7
Zone rate	68.57%	83.33%	100.00%
Average Retention Rate	75.0%		

4.e.1

	E-4	E-5	E-6
Advancement			
# Advanced on Spring Exam	18	9	3
# Taking Spring exam	34	44	23
# Advanced on Fall Exam	10	5	2
# Taking on Fall exam	44	39	21
Total Advancement Rate	23.0%		

4.e.2

	E-4	E-5	E-6
Passed Not Advanced			
# PNA on Spring Exam	16	32	19
# Taking on Spring exam	34	44	23
# PNA on Fall Exam	34	34	21
# Taking Fall exam	44	39	21
Total PNA Rate	76.0%		

4.e.3

	Fall	Spring
Physical Readiness Standards		
Total passed within standards	146	143
Total eligible personnel	147	146
Cycle Percentage	99.3%	97.9%
Final/average Percentage	98.6%	

4.e.4

	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Medical Readiness Score												
Monthly Score	65.6	80.1	74.8	64.5	72.1	81	77.6	92.3	98.1	98.5	99	96.1
Average Score	83.3											

4.e.5

Health Promotion Score	
------------------------	--

4.e.6

4.f.1	Number of Class Alpha Mishaps	0
	Score	100
4.f.2	Number of Class Bravo Mishaps	0
	Score	100
4.f.3	FOD Occurences	0
4.f.4	Number of HAZREPS submitted	6
4.f.5	NATOPS Changes submitted	0
4.f.6	NATOPS Changes accepted	0
4.f.7	Safety Articles submitted	1
4.f.8	Safety Articles published	1
4.f.9	Number of NAMDRP reports submitted	74
4.g.1	Tactical Documents submitted	1
4.g.2	Tactical Documents published	1
4.g.3	Tactical Projects completed	0
4.g.4	TACMAN Changes submitted	0
4.g.5	TACMAN Changes accepted	0
4.g.6	Professional Articles submitted	22
4.g.7	Professional Articles published	20
4.h.1	Bomb Derby participant? (yes=1, no=0)	1
4.h.2	Bomb Derby Winner? (yes=1, no=0)	0

STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON

ONE THREE SEVEN

(VFA-137)

LTJG BRUCE CARRIER
MEMORIAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE
Nomination



1650
Ser 00/275

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on VFA-137 ltr 1650 Ser 00/275 of 30 Oct 08

From: Commander, Carrier Air Wing TWO
To: Commander, Strike Fighter Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Subj: LTJG BRUCE CARRIER AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN MAINTENANCE

1. Forwarded, most strongly recommending selection. The Kestrels of VFA-137 have been the mainstay of my air wing, executing every mission and task given with humble precision. They performed extraordinarily well leading up to and throughout an arduous seven month combat deployment. Superlative teamwork is evident from Maintenance Control to Quality Assurance to the maintainers that prepare the aircraft. The result is a cohesive, high performance organization which consistently fields safe, quality aircraft for every tasking. I have every confidence in Kestrel aircraft, knowing that full mission capable Super Hornets will deliver ordnance on target.

2. The Kestrels have the finest aircraft and the strongest group of professional maintainers with whom I have had the pleasure to serve. They excelled in every facet during the past year while setting the standard for professionalism and teamwork. I am supremely proud to have the Kestrel team in my air wing and am honored to lead them into combat. The Kestrels are my most deserving squadron and have my strongest possible personal recommendation for receipt of the FY08 Bruce Carrier Award.

A. E. ROSS

Copy to:
VFA-137

STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON ONE THREE SEVEN
BRUCE CARRIER NOMINATION DATA

1. As per CSFWPINST 1650.10C CH-2 the following information is submitted.

2. NAVRIIP Data

a. RFT, monthly RFT was determined as a percentage of Mission Capable aircraft divided by Aircraft Assigned. (Source 3M Summary)

FY08 Month	A/C Assigned	RFT/RBA Standard	RBA Actual	FY08 Month	A/C Assigned	RFT/RBA Standard	RBA Actual
OCT	12	7.9	9.8	APR	12	9.0	10.6
NOV	12	7.9	9.6	MAY	12	9.0	10.0
DEC	12	7.9	8.5	JUN	12	9.0	10.4
JAN	12	7.9	9.2	JUL	12	9.0	10.4
FEB	12	7.9	8.6	AUG	12	9.0	10.2
MAR	12	4.5	10.6	SEP	12	7.9	10.6

b. Maintenance Man Hour per Flight Hour. (Source DECKPLATE)

FY08 Month	MMH / FLT HR						
OCT	22	JAN	9.3	APR	17.6	JUL	7.5
NOV	8.8	FEB	64.4	MAY	9.0	AUG	13.1
DEC	34.0	MAR	20.5	JUN	10.7	SEP	60.1

c. FH / NMC Event ratio was determined by dividing the number of monthly flight hours by the number of documented Not Mission Capable events. (Source NAVAIR DECKPLATE / SCIR-3)

FY08 Month	FH / NMC Event						
OCT	29.8	JAN	21.4	APR	19.4	JUL	20.4
NOV	22.3	FEB	17.3	MAY	27.6	AUG	32.3
DEC	19.0	MAR	12.4	JUN	23.1	SEP	22.4

d. Cannibalization @ 100 FH. (Source NAVAIR DECKPLATE)

FY08 Month	CANN / 100 FH						
OCT	6.4	JAN	2.7	APR	5	JUL	3.1
NOV	1.8	FEB	5.4	MAY	5.7	AUG	5.8
DEC	19	MAR	6.4	JUN	5.1	SEP	11.6

3. Inspection Results

a. Most recent AMI and MPA results:

Number of Programs ON TRACK	AMI	40	MPA	30
Number of Programs NMA	AMI	0	MPA	8
Number of Programs OFF TRACK	AMI	3	MPA	5

b. Material Condition Inspection: SAT

4. Maintenance Related MISHAPS:

VFA-137 had ZERO Class A / B / C mishaps during FY-08.

5. Maintenance Reporting

Number Maintenance Related Engine FOD reports: 0

Number NAMDRP reports submitted: 74

Number Maintenance / Safety Articles submitted: 2

STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON

ONE THREE SEVEN

(VFA-137)

Secretary of Defense

PHOENIX AWARD

Nomination



1650
Ser 00/XXX
XX Nov XX

FIRST ENDORSEMENT on VFA-137 ltr 1650 Ser 00/293 of 13 Nov 08

From: Commander, Carrier Air Wing TWO
To: Commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Via: Commander, Strike Fighter Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Subj: NOMINATION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
PHOENIX AWARD FOR MAINTENANCE EXCELLENCE

1. Forwarded, most strongly recommending approval. The Kestrels of VFA-137 have been the mainstay of my Airwing, executing every mission and task given them. They have performed extraordinarily well throughout an arduous seven month combat deployment onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN. Superlative teamwork is evident from Maintenance Control to Quality Assurance to the maintainers that prepare the aircraft. The result is a cohesive, highly successful organization which consistently fielded safe, mission ready aircraft for every tasking. I have every confidence in the Kestrel team, knowing that full mission capable Super Hornets will deliver ordnance on target, on time.

2. The Kestrels have the finest aircraft and the strongest group of professional maintainers with whom I have had the pleasure to serve. They have excelled in every facet of maintenance planning and execution during the past year. They have set the standard for professionalism and teamwork. I am supremely proud to have the Kestrel team in my Airwing and was honored to lead them into combat. The Kestrels are most deserving of this prestigious award and have earned my strongest possible personal recommendation for receipt of the 2008 Secretary of Defense Phoenix Award for Maintenance Excellence.

A. E. ROSS

Copy to:
VFA-137

1650
Ser 00/

From: Commanding Officer, Strike Fighter Squadron 137
To: Commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Via: (1) Commander, Carrier Air Wing TWO
(2) Commander, Strike Fighter Wing, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Subj: NOMINATION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
PHOENIX AWARD FOR MAINTENANCE EXCELLENCE

Ref: (a) DODINST 1348.30
(b) OPNAVINST 5305.9

Encl: (1) Nomination Package

1. Per references (a) and (b), enclosure (1) is submitted to nominate Strike Fighter Squadron 137 for the 2008 Secretary of Defense Phoenix Award for Maintenance Excellence (small category).

2. The Kestrel Maintenance Department has successfully confronted every challenge with unparalleled results. Quality, consistency, and safety are at the forefront of our production efforts, programs, and procedures. The very complex and unforgiving process of putting ordnance on target begins with fundamentally safe aircraft and requires complex weapons systems that work. Our maintenance department has consistently delivered both. This outstanding Kestrel performance is a product of compliance with scheduled maintenance and "by-the-book" professional action from a team that takes pride in quality maintenance.

3. Our maintenance professionals' high standards are unmatched in providing quality aircraft as proven by airwing leading performance from the flight deck of USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN-72) during fiscal year 2008 and for four months over the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan. It is truly a privilege to fly top-notch aircraft that reflect outstanding technical acumen. Our readiness is a derivative of vigilant safety practices and steadfast devotion to high standards. Our maintenance department is the very definition of excellence in Naval Aviation, and stands out as the clear leader in this category. Kestrel maintenance has earned the trust and respect of the entire Hornet community. The Secretary of Defense Phoenix Award for Maintenance Excellence is fitting recognition for the Kestrel Maintenance Department professionals who led Carrier Air Wing TWO and Strike Fighter Wing Pacific in every endeavor.

D. D. KINDLEY



STRIKE FIGHTER SQUADRON

ONE THREE SEVEN

(VFA-137)

Secretary of Defense

PHOENIX AWARD

Nomination

2008

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SECTION 1
NOMINATION

FIELD LEVEL NOMINATION PACKAGE INFORMATION SHEET

1. Military Service: United States Navy
2. Specific unit designation: Strike Fighter Squadron ONE THREE SEVEN
3. Category / Unit Size: Small / 217
4. Commander's Name and Mailing Address:

Commander David D. Kindley
Strike Fighter Squadron 137
Unit 60148
FPO AP 96601-6239

5. Point of contact at nominated unit:

Primary

Name: CDR C. T. Wilson

E-mail: [REDACTED]@
navy.mil

Phone (com'l): 559-[REDACTED]

DSN: [REDACTED]

Facsimile: 559-[REDACTED]

Alternate

Name: ENS [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]@navy.mil

Phone (com'l): 559-[REDACTED]

DSN: [REDACTED]

Facsimile: 559-[REDACTED]

6. Military service point of contact:

Primary

Name: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]@navy.mil

Phone (com'l): 559-[REDACTED]

DSN: [REDACTED]

Facsimile: 559-[REDACTED]

Alternate

Name: AOCM [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]@navy.mil

Phone (com'l): 559-[REDACTED]

DSN: [REDACTED]

Facsimile: 559-[REDACTED]

7. Complete message address of nominated unit and the nominated unit's higher headquarters.

STRKFITRON ONE THREE SEVEN
COMSTRKFIGHTWINGPAC LEMOORE CA//N10//

8. Background information for nominated unit:

Strike Fighter Squadron ONE THREE SEVEN was established as VFA-137 operating the F/A-18A in July 1985 at Naval Air Station Lemoore, CA. The squadron transitioned from the F/A-18A to the F/A-18C in September 1992. In June 2003, the Kestrels

transitioned to and are currently operating 12 F/A-18E Super Hornets.

9. Unit size: Officer 23, Enlisted 194.

10. Unit location: Naval Air Station Lemoore, CA.

11. Unit mission statement:

Providing combat ready, trained and educated forces to Commander, Carrier Air Wing TWO enabling sustained carrier-based air power projection.

12. Operational chronology of significant operational events, deployments and major training exercises (1 October 2007 - 30 September 2008).

<u>Operation</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Dates</u>
COMPTUEX	USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN	24OCT07 - 14NOV07
JTFEX	USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN	23JAN08 - 01FEB08
WESTPAC & FIFTH Fleet Deployment 2008	USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN	17MAR08 - 30SEP08

SECTION 2

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. Mission Accomplishment

1. Accomplishment of unit mission requirements.

The Kestrels displayed exceptional flexibility and dedication to mission accomplishment during a trying and continually changing turnaround training schedule that culminated with a seven month deployment onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN to the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman. While in the Gulf region, the Kestrels provided close air support to coalition ground forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The Kestrels met deployed objectives with exceptional results, leading Carrier Air Wing TWO in all mission accomplishment and aircraft readiness matrices; the cornerstone of its success. Throughout fiscal year 2008, VFA-137 maintenance personnel provided a superb level of aircraft readiness. The department was aggressively proactive in maintaining the highest quality aircraft possible to ensure mission accomplishment. The Kestrels truly understand both "cost wise" and safe maintenance practices, and effectively employ the F/A-18E Strike Fighter in a variety of missions to include: air-to-ground, air-to-air, in-flight air refueling and tactical reconnaissance with the Shared Air Reconnaissance Pod. During the fiscal year, VFA-137 flew an impressive 3,283 sorties totaling 7,106 flight hours with 1,276 sorties and 4,262 flight hours flown in support of combat operations--all tops in Carrier Air Wing TWO.

The true measure of operational readiness is the tactical employment of aircraft with live weapons. The Kestrels proved their mettle by employing tactical aircraft in several scenarios throughout the year. Most notable, the squadron delivered 21 precision guided weapons in direct support of coalition ground forces.

2. Aircraft / Weapon System material readiness status.

The Navy's Fleet Response Plan (FRP) requires that aircraft entitlements fluctuate during different phases of the turnaround training cycle. Flight Line Standard and Ready for Training (RFT) aircraft entitlements dictate the level of aircraft supported by Typewing Commanders. As a percentage of FRP entitlements, the Kestrels averaged a 59.8 percent full-mission capable rate, and 79.1 percent mission capable rate to out perform Chief of Naval Operation goals of 58 percent, and 75 percent respectively.

The Kestrels demonstrated an unmatched level of flexibility and consistent aircraft system reliability during

their entire 2008 combat deployment. The squadron used each of its aircraft in a variety of combat and support role configurations, logically scheduling the most efficient use of its assets while significantly leveling the fatigue life of its air force. All of the Kestrels' 12 aircraft were used in the Fighter/Attack configuration providing close air support to coalition forces. Ten different aircraft were flown in the tanker configuration, providing mission and recovery in-flight air refueling capability to air wing aircraft. Seven different aircraft were flown in reconnaissance configuration, providing near real time intelligence on enemy movement and force size.

3. Operational deployment participations and successes.

17MAR08-30SEP08. Embarked onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN for WESTPAC 2008, the squadron participated in combat operations in Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM under the operational control of the U.S. Navy's FIFTH Fleet for six months. The Kestrels provided close air support (CAS) for coalition ground forces where they flew an airwing best 1,276 sorties totaling 4,262 flight hours.

The Kestrels were highly effective in combat close air support provided to United States and coalition ground forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan. From 30 April 2008 through 4 July 2008 the Kestrels flew 230 close air support missions over Iraq and provided real time intelligence and situational awareness to ground forces. From 8 July through 27 August, the Kestrels flew 242 close air support missions over Afghanistan. During this period, 21 precision guided weapons and over 1,000 rounds of High Explosive Incendiary 20mm shells were delivered in support of ground forces.

The Kestrels also provided "organic tanking" to air wing aircraft. The mission and recovery fuel provided by organic tankers made long range strike fighter missions from the carrier possible. The Kestrels boasted an impressive 99.1 tanker percent tanker sortie completion rate during this operational period with a 98 percent tanker mission success rate.

The command also became the first F/A-18E squadron to perform the Shared Air Reconnaissance (SHARP) mission in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Exhibiting an unmatched level of aircraft readiness and systems availability, the Kestrels flew their first SHARP mission just days prior to combat operations. Although the SHARP mission is not a "Required Operational Capability" for F/A-18E squadrons, Kestrel maintenance flexibility allowed an

immediate response to realtime theater reconnaissance needs. This new mission set, flawlessly incorporated into the other myriad Kestrel maintenance requirements, permitted the squadron to perform the SHARP mission in combat with unmatched successes in the completion of 92 of 94 scheduled SHARP sorties and 91 of 94 successful reconnaissance missions.

4. Local and higher headquarters exercise participations and successes.

The Kestrels participated in two unit level and higher headquarters exercises during fiscal year 2008. Opportunistic maintenance practices and effective planning again had VFA-137 consistently leading Carrier Air Wing TWO in tactical employment during both evolutions. A brief summary of each of these exercises is provided below.

24OCT07-17NOV07. Embarked onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN for Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX), the squadron participated in its first shipboard operational exercise of FY-08. The Kestrels excelled in the areas of operational readiness and support, leading Carrier Air Wing TWO in sortie completion rate, flight hours and mission success rates. This exercise also provided the best opportunity to showcase the squadron's maintenance capability and flexibility. Prior planning and maintenance scheduling ensured all four tanker aircraft were full-mission capable for the entire at-sea period. 17 of 17 squadron pilots were qualified for shipboard flight operations, and pilots consistently manned up full mission capable aircraft for refueling, strike and fighter missions.

23JAN08-01FEB08. Embarked onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN for Joint Task Force Exercise (JTFEX), the squadron participated in the last shipboard operational exercise prior to its 2008 combat deployment. The Kestrels once again excelled in the areas of operational readiness and support, leading Carrier Air Wing TWO in sortie completion rate, flight hours and mission success rates. 17 of 17 pilots maintained their qualifications for shipboard flight operations.

5. Special programs and technical directive compliance.

During fiscal year 2008, the Kestrels incorporated 1,547 technical directives on 12 aircraft. The compliance of these maintenance actions were accurately documented and reported.

6. Specific challenges unique to the operational environment.

Cycling between shipboard and shore operations provides many unique challenges. These challenges were exacerbated during the early months of the fiscal year as the training schedule was compressed to meet the ship's hard scheduling requirements. The Kestrels conducted shipboard operations during six of the first 12 weeks of the fiscal year. After only a short stand down, the Kestrels embarked USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN on 17 March and remained onboard for the rest of the year. During this time, the command faced a tremendous logistical challenge faced by the replacement of 21 aircraft engines. Effective utilization of resources and an aggressive Planned Maintenance Schedule allowed the squadron to overcome this challenge while still attaining a 96 percent mission completion rate for combat sorties and flying required unit level training hours.

B. Effective Use of Maintenance Resources

The Kestrels actively managed 12 aircraft, 24 Engines, six Aerial Refueling Stores (ARS), eight Advanced Targeting Forward Looking Infrared (ATFLIR) PODs and one Shared Air Reconnaissance POD (SHARP). Utilizing a forward thinking approach to meet operational commitments, aircraft were configured to maximize operational readiness while minimizing fatigue life expenditure and general "wear and tear." Specifically, aircraft configured with the ARS were rotated through operational exercises and deployments to evenly distribute fatigue life across assigned aircraft.

VFA-137 continually monitored engine life and assigned engines to specific aircraft to ensure maximum utilization without impacting mission accomplishment. While the action of moving engines from one aircraft to another may be cumbersome, the cost benefits of this procedure greatly exceeded the cost of early induction of engines into Intermediate and Depot level activities.

Aerial refueling is a mission essential task placed on the Super Hornet community. The Kestrels began the deployment workup cycle by installing the ARS on aircraft and ensuring the proper operation of this critical system prior to conducting shipboard operations. The end effect of this planning was that the Kestrels led Carrier Air Wing TWO in tanker operations and tanking sortie completion rates during both exercises and while on deployment.

Providing operational ATFLIR training to squadron pilots is one of the most difficult challenges faced by an F/A-18 maintenance department. These limited assets are essential for

training and combat missions. Therefore, an exceptionally high priority was placed on keeping ATFLIR pods in a full-mission capable status. Kestrel maintenance forethought ensured ATFLIR installation only after major scheduled maintenance in order to maximize asset use while minimizing the possibility of damage during the removal and installation process.

The Kestrels were the first F/A-18E squadron to operate SHARP in both Iraq and Afghanistan. These high quality reconnaissance images were vital to battle plan development and the safety of ground forces. Intelligence gathered from these missions provided information on enemy forces size, location and movement.

Each of these areas in itself contributes a small part to the Kestrels' amazingly successful aircraft availability and mission success rates. Collectively, these actions set VFA-137 apart from other Super Hornet activities by consistently meeting and frequently exceeding aircraft readiness entitlements.

C. Innovative Management Accomplishments

1. Equipment improvement recommendations that resulted in an improved readiness posture.

A total of 74 Naval Aviation Maintenance Discrepancy Reports were submitted during fiscal year 2008. A list of these reports is provided below.

REPORT	SUBJECT	STATUS	DATE
CODR	CATM-9M	CLOSED	23OCT07
CODR	CATM-9M	CLOSED	23OCT07
CODR	CATM-9X	CLOSED	14FEB08
CODR	20 MM GUN	CLOSED	27FEB08
CODR	20 MM GUN	CLOSED	04MAR08
CODR	SN97 THIN LAYER EXPLOSIVE	CLOSED	07MAR08
CODR	ADU-773	CLOSED	10MAR08
CODR	20 MM GUN	CLOSED	11MAR08
CODR	MK-19	CLOSED	20MAR08
CODR	GUN	CLOSED	08APR08
CODR	CATM-9	CLOSED	11APR08
CODR	RMU-572	CLOSED	12MAY08
CODR	AIM 9X	CLOSED	18MAY08
CODR	SMDC	CLOSED	09JUN08
CODR	GBU-48	CLOSED	14JUL08
CODR	AIM-9X	CLOSED	16JUL08
CODR	MAU-209/B/LASER GUIDED	CLOSED	21JUL08
CODR	GBU-38	CLOSED	22JUL08

CODR	JDAM	CLOSED	22JUL08
CODR	LAU-127	CLOSED	18SEP08

TOTAL: 20

<u>REPORT</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>STATUS</u>	<u>DATE</u>
TPDR	IETMS	CLOSED	01APR08
TPDR	IETMS	CLOSED	01APR08
TPDR	17-1FA18EF-1 (PANEL B: 9/6)	CLOSED	07JUL08
TPDR	INLET DEVICE INSP	CLOSED	03JUL08
TPDR	AMG-65E	CLOSED	10JUL08

TOTAL: 5

<u>REPORT</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>STATUS</u>	<u>DATE</u>
PQDR	ANCHOR NUT - AKQ-214 RAK	CLOSED	24OCT07
PQDR	AMAD WIRE HARNESS	CLOSED	21MAY08
PQDR	AMAD WIRE HARNESS	CLOSED	21MAY08
PQDR	SIGNAL DATA COMPUTER	CLOSED	16SEP08

TOTAL: 4

<u>REPORT</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>STATUS</u>	<u>DATE</u>
HMR	ENGINE, SN: 0868040	CLOSED	27OCT07
HMR	MLG DOWNLOCK PROX SWITCH HARNESS	CLOSED	03MAR08
HMR	MLG DOWNLOCK PROX SWITCH HARNESS	CLOSED	03MAR08
HMR	PLENUM CHECK VALVE	CLOSED	31MAR08
HMR	PLENUM CHECK VALVE	CLOSED	31MAR08
HMR	AMAD PRESSURE SWITCH	CLOSED	10APR08
HMR	AMAD PRESSURE SWITCH	CLOSED	11APR08
HMR	AMAD PRESSURE SWITCH	CLOSED	24APR08
HMR	ANTI ICING VALVE	CLOSED	21MAY08
HMR	MLG DOWNLOCK WIRE HARNESS	CLOSED	01AUG08
HMR	ALQ-214 BOLTS	CLOSED	23MAY08
HMR	ALQ-214 BOLTS	CLOSED	23MAY08
HMR	TERMINAL LUGS	CLOSED	01AUG08
HMR	EXTERNAL FUEL TANK	CLOSED	01AUG08
HMR	SUU-78 (CENTERLINE PYLON)	CLOSED	19AUG08
HMR	MLG INBOARD DOOR	CLOSED	28AUG08
HMR	MLG DOWNLOCK WIRE HARNESS	CLOSED	05SEP08

TOTAL: 17

<u>REPORT</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>STATUS</u>	<u>DATE</u>
HMR/EI	PITOT STATIC TEM PROBE (R55142-08-0045)	CLOSED	11SEP08
HMR/EI	TFOA - RUDDER FAIRING	CLOSED	09NOV07

HMR/EI	MLG DOWNLOCK PROX SWITCH HARNESS	CLOSED	17DEC07
HMR/EI	PITOT STATIC TEMPERATURE PROBE	CLOSED	04JAN08
HMR/EI	GEARED UNIVERSAL JOINT	CLOSED	25FEB08
HMR/EI	PORT MM TIRE	CLOSED	04MAR08
HMR/EI	TFOA - LENS ASSEMBLY	CLOSED	26MAR08
HMR/EI	PS2.1 TO FADEC LOWER AIR TUBE	CLOSED	10APR08
HMR/EI	ETPR - AIR PRESSURE REGULATOR	CLOSED	21MAY08
HMR/EI	AOA TRANSMITTER	CLOSED	07MAY08
HMR/EI	HYD PUMP	CLOSED	19JUL08

TOTAL: 11

REPORT	SUBJECT	STATUS
PQDR/CAT I	DIGITAL DATA COMPUTER	OPEN
HMR	MLG DOWNLOCK PROX SWITCH HARNESS	OPEN
HMR	HOSE ASSEMBLY, SEAT PAN	OPEN
PQDR/CAT I	SENSOR ASSY, LATERAL STICK	OPEN
HMR/EI	MLG DOWNLOCK WIRE HARNESS	OPEN
PQDR/CAT II	OBOGS REGULATOR	OPEN
HMR	EXTERNAL FUEL TANK	OPEN
HMR	EXTERNAL FUEL TANK	OPEN
HMR	EXTERNAL FUEL TANK	OPEN
PQDR/CAT II	ATTITUDE REFERENCE INDICATOR	OPEN
PQDR/CAT II	ATTITUDE REFERENCE INDICATOR	OPEN
HMR	EXTERNAL FUEL TANK	OPEN
HMR	EXTERNAL FUEL TANK	OPEN
HMR	EXTERNAL FUEL TANK	OPEN
HMR	EXTERNAL FUEL TANK	OPEN
HMR	EXTERNAL FUEL TANK	OPEN
HMR	MLG DOWNLOCK WIRE HARNESS	OPEN
HMR	EXTERNAL FUEL TANK	OPEN

TOTAL: 17

2. Resource management innovations and improvements.

Cost-wise readiness and cannibalization actions are competing interests in maintaining squadron aircraft. Maintenance Control supervisors and technicians make every effort to ensure that the very expensive aircraft parts we buy fix aircraft the first time. VFA-137 incorporated an 18 step plan of action containing documentation procedures and detailed actions to be taken to isolate and document faulty components while minimizing cost.

Kestrel financial managers aggressively pursued the knowledge required to effectively maintain squadron financial records. In their pursuit of personal growth, they tailored many

Naval Aviation programs to fit the needs of VFA-137. Specifically, the way the command reviews and uses its Aviation Financial Assistant Tool (AFAST) data makes for more qualified decision making. Their efforts resulted in a more thorough understanding of maximizing readiness while reducing cost at the squadron level. The Material Control Officer trained squadron Maintenance Officers and Chief Petty Officers in the interpretation and analysis of AFAST data, which also filtered down to key enlisted maintainers. Cost-wise readiness is now a common goal for the entire Maintenance Department.

VFA-137 effectively used resources such as the Defense Reutilization Marketing Office to acquire essential squadron equipment in support of flight operations and maintenance, resulting in a savings of over \$30,000 in squadron funds for Fiscal Year 2008. The Kestrel Material Control Branch impeccably managed 29.5 million dollars in squadron fuel funds to a 99.9 percent expenditure rate. Utilizing meticulous control metrics, Material Control led the squadron in reducing AVDLR and AFM expenditures to 23.6 percent below CNAF target goals. Additionally, all government purchase card 7F expenditures totaling \$52,000 were scrutinized for moral and ethical guidelines of purchasing directives.

The squadron's policy of storing and transporting aircraft maintenance data cards in protective cases paid big dividends. Prior to the implementation of this policy, 15 cards were replaced at a cost of \$2,000 each. Since implementation in October 2007, no cards have been damaged in the rugged flight deck environment.

3. Safety programs.

The squadron maintains an aggressive Command Safety Program. In an effort to meet the highest degree of safety awareness, command sponsored safety stand-downs are conducted quarterly. These stand-downs serve to focus the squadron's attention on safety related issues ranging from motor vehicle safety to suicide prevention. Weekly maintenance safety training focuses on applied ORM for all of our Sailors while at work or at home. Our efforts have paid great dividends as the Kestrels have continued their "mishap free since inception" record of over 95,000 flight hours and 23 years class "A" mishap free and earned the CNAF Safety "S" for 3rd quarter, fiscal year 2008.

4. Training programs.

Truly understanding the effect of proper training on aircraft maintenance, the squadron enforced a strict policy of formal training, sending 19 Sailors to rate-specific schools. Additionally, 23 Navy Enlisted Classification Change Requests were submitted to ensure that this training is correctly documented and reported.

5. Production control innovations and improvements.

The Kestrels opportunistic approach to maintenance has been the cornerstone of providing safe and fully operational aircraft. A list of maintenance actions taken to improve aircraft readiness is provided below.

- Alignment of phase and scheduled maintenance. While the alignment of maintenance is a common objective in many organizational level units, VFA-137 actively manages the use of aircraft and flight time to maximize the amount of maintenance completed during a single period. Aircraft are also scheduled to minimize the number of aircraft simultaneously undergoing major maintenance, allowing the Kestrels to routinely fill flight schedule holes that other CVW-2 squadrons cannot fill.

- Strut servicing during 84 day inspections. Although the 84 day inspection is primarily a corrosion inspection, it also can provide an opportunity to service aircraft landing gear struts which is a requirement during phased inspections. A phase inspection requires that all struts be serviced within a 90 day period. Servicing struts during 84 day inspections provides increased flexibility to accomplish phased maintenance onboard ship where "jacking spots" are limited.

- Depot level field modification scheduling. Depot level field modifications are scheduled, to the maximum extent possible, with aircraft calendar day inspections. Depot level field modifications are primarily accomplished during the aforementioned 84 day inspection.

- Third production shift. Aircraft painting and weapon system release and control checks each require that no other maintenance actions are being performed on aircraft. To maximize production efforts, aircraft painters and release and control check teams work a third production shift while shore based. This shift works flexible hours, Sunday through Thursday when aircraft availability and production needs are most accurately aligned.

D. Personnel Quality of Life Programs

1. Self-help programs.

Realizing the importance of a clean and functional work environment, the Kestrels have used personnel arriving to the command as a work space rehabilitation team. Each member arriving to the command during the deployment played some role in the improvement of work spaces. Each of the command's doors, as well as general entrances, now bear the command logo and reflect the pride of the newest Kestrels in the squadron.

2. Personnel recognition programs.

Recognizing personal accomplishments is a military tradition and something that the Kestrels strongly support. The command provides several awards throughout the year on a quarterly and yearly basis. The "Bluejacket of the Quarter/Year" are presented to personnel in paygrades E-3 and below. The "Junior Sailor of the Quarter/Year" are presented to personnel in paygrades E-4 and E-5. "Senior Sailor of the Quarter/Year" are presented to E-6 personnel. In addition to quarterly and yearly awards the Commanding Officer frequently presents a Kestrel "High Flyer" and command coin to worthy recipients who go above and beyond their normal job requirements.

3. Community projects.

During a demanding turnaround training cycle the Kestrels still found time to support the local community. Specifically, volunteers from the Kestrels and their family members participated in the "Read Along" program at Neutra Elementary School. The command also sponsors a Student of the Month Award at the school.

4. Humanitarian projects and programs.

The Kestrels participated in "Habitat for Humanity" events in Visalia, CA. Additionally, many of the command's First Class Petty Officers serve meals at the Hanford, CA soup kitchen.

5. Spousal support.

Family support is a high priority for the Kestrels. During fiscal year 2008 the command's ombudsmen were actively involved in many command activities. They were provided with access to squadron e-mail to allow for distribution of a quarterly

newsletter, keeping family members advised of squadron events and detachment scheduling. In addition, the ombudsman provided insight and helpful instructions to ensure family members were taken care of, both physically and administratively, during the absence of their active duty members.

The Kestrel's Family Readiness Group (FRG) played a major role in providing stability for the Kestrels' spouses and children. The FRG's goal is to integrate many of the spousal support networks into a single entity and to provide a social arena for all squadron family members. The FRG held fundraisers by providing meals during working hours at the hangar, further enhancing family member's sense of belonging to the organization. During the Kestrels' seven month deployment, the FRG held several events that brought our families together, to include picnics, a "half-way" event, and other group occasions. This social support network truly makes everyone at VFA-137 a member of the family.

6. Enlisted Education / Advancement Opportunities.

Opportunities for education and advancement of enlisted Sailors was second only to combat operations. VFA-137 took advantage of NCPACE and online education to provide all who desired the opportunity to take college courses ashore and afloat. Several members of the squadron took advantage of the opportunities made available to them with several completing requirements for Associates and Bachelor degrees.

Recognizing the importance of enlisted advancement for retention efforts as well as on morale and the general well being of Sailors, VFA-137 formed "Kestrel University." Kestrel "U" is designed to support the Navy's enlisted advancement system. Rate specific, leadership and general study materials were gathered and distributed to each of the command's Sailors. Each Sailor's progress was then tracked and participation levels were graded. Sailors displaying exceptional commitment to the program are recognized quarterly through the command's Honor Roll and Dean's List.

SECTION 3

CITATION

The Secretary of Defense takes pleasure in presenting the
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PHOENIX AWARD FOR MAINTENANCE EXCELLENCE to

Strike Fighter Squadron ONE THREE SEVEN

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For meritorious service in the performance of organizational level aircraft maintenance from 1 October 2007 to 30 September 2008. Strike Fighter Squadron ONE THREE SEVEN distinguished itself through a myriad of maintenance achievements while participating in combat operations supporting coalition forces in Operations IRAQI and ENDURING FREEDOM. The Kestrels' demonstrated superb aircraft maintenance practices and aviation program management, consistently leading with a "cost-wise" safety conscious approach to wartime aviation maintenance. Their efforts culminated in leading Carrier Air TWO in all operational metrics while excelling in close air support missions in two theaters. The Kestrels to flew an unsurpassed 7,106 flight hours, 4,262 of which were in combat operations, and were the first F/A-18E squadron to provide tactical air reconnaissance support in both Iraq and Afghanistan. By their steadfast perseverance, unflinching devotion to their country and dedication to duty, the Sailors of Strike Fighter Squadron ONE THREE SEVEN reflected great credit upon themselves and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Armed Forces."